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A  
PRACTICAL EXPOSITION  
OF THE  
EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS  
IN A  
SERIES OF LECTURES

ADAPTED TO BE READ IN FAMILIES AND SOCIAL MEETINGS.

BY THE  
REV. WILLIAM NEILL, D. D.,  
AUTHOR OF BIBLICAL HISTORY, ETC.

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## P R E F A C E .

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THE author has endeavoured in this brief Exposition to give a faithful view of the doctrines and duties inculcated in the Epistle. It is not at all critical or elaborate; but plain and practical, and designed to help the serious reader to a right understanding of the Apostle's meaning.

The Epistle itself is one of the richest and most precious portions of divine revelation. We have here, in six short chapters, which may be read in half an hour, a dense and comprehensive epitome of the great truths of the gospel. Such a variety of subjects in so small a compass, is characteristic of the inspired text. These expository lectures are intended to illustrate and apply the principles of Christian faith and practice. If the volume

in which they are here embodied, shall prove a useful book to read in families, or social meetings in the absence of a preacher, the author's main object will be accomplished. Should the work be deemed too urgent and exhortatory in its style for an Exposition, let it be remembered that the gospel may be published, and its claims urged, not only from the pulpit, but also through the press; so that our testimony may be continued after our labours are finished, and we are gone to our long home.

A desire to prolong one's service in the cause of truth, may be a sufficient reason for the publication of a book, even if it have no special claim to public favour. It may do some good where abler works would fail. God often uses feeble instrumentalities in promoting his own great purposes of mercy, and to show forth his gracious power; his thoughts and ways are not as ours. This little volume is put forth with no lofty pretensions or sanguine expectations, but as a small contribution to the religious literature of the age. Let it find its proper place, and pass for what it is worth. It is designed as

the author's testimony to the doctrines of grace, and the forgiveness of sin, through the merits and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ; to whose blessing it is commended, and to whom be glory for ever!

PHILADELPHIA, April, 1850.



PRACTICAL EXPOSITION  
OF THE  
EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

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LECTURE I.

EPHESIANS, I. 1—4.—Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”

IN this brief, but rich and comprehensive epistle, we shall meet with subjects of a profound and intricate nature;—subjects on which men of perhaps equal learning and piety do not think exactly alike. To these points it will become us to attend with a modest, candid, and teachable state of mind, remembering the words of the Psalmist, “The meek will he guide in judgment; and the meek will he teach his way.” Psalm xxv. 9.

Ephesus, where the Christians lived to whom this epistle was immediately and principally addressed, as is well known, was the chief city in Asia Minor. It was the residence of the pro-consul, or governor of the province. It was situated on the coast of the Ægæan Sea, now called the Archipelago. It was a place of considerable note; distinguished for its wealth and learning; but pre-eminent for idolatry and the magic arts. Here

stood the famous temple of Diana, one of the wonders of the world, containing an image of that goddess, said to have fallen from heaven. The worship of this image was celebrated with the most pompous rites, attended by numerous priests and crowds of votaries. The Ephesians, in general, appear to have been a dissolute and wicked people, "walking, as the apostle expresses it, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit which worketh in the children of disobedience." But God entertained designs of mercy towards some, even in Ephesus, whom he had determined to call out of darkness, and rescue from the power of Satan. On perusing the 18th and 19th chapters of "The Acts," you will find that the apostle Paul had laboured among them in word and doctrine, at different times, about the space of three years, as he remarks to the elders of the church, whom he afterwards met at Miletus, on his way to Jerusalem. The congregation collected under his ministry, was probably large and respectable. It included persons of various ranks, both Jews and Gentiles. This circumstance, together with the commercial character, idolatry and splendour of the place, rendered them peculiarly liable to be seduced from the good ways of the Lord, not only by the example of the profane, but by the arts of false teachers. Paul, notwithstanding his own sufferings, retained his tender concern for their spiritual welfare. During his imprisonment at Rome, and about the sixtieth year of our Lord, as is generally believed, he wrote them this epistle; in which he gives them an epitome of the gospel. The epistle is now divided into six chapters: the first three are chiefly doctrinal, the others are practical, and relate principally to the duties of social life. In order to secure their serious attention to the subjects on which he was about to treat, the writer addresses



them in his appropriate character, recognizing them as the professed disciples of the Redeemer. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." The word apostle designates, in general, a person who is commissioned by another to transact important business, either of a secular or religious nature. The apostles of Jesus Christ were charged with the promulgation of his gospel. To this sacred work they were called off from their several occupations, and endued with power to perform miracles, in confirmation of what they declared and taught. As Paul was not one of the original twelve, whom the Saviour at first appointed, his enemies spared no pains to discredit his pretensions to that high and holy character. Hence we find him, uniformly, in the beginning of his epistles, asserting his claim in firm and dignified, though modest and unassuming language. His call to the apostleship was in the face of day—on an occasion which could not fail to attract public attention; and was accompanied by circumstances of so extraordinary a nature, as left no room to doubt that he was constituted an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will, and according to the command and purpose of God the Father. "To the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." It is the opinion of several judicious commentators, that the apostle intended this epistle, not only for the Ephesians, but likewise for the neighbouring churches who might have an opportunity of perusing it. If this be the fact, it accounts for the two modes of expression used in the inscription, "Saints at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus;" as the latter is more general and comprehensive than the former. But it is of much more consequence to remark the import of these titles by which Christians are distinguished. Saints, means holy persons; and, though

it is not applicable, in a strict sense, to any of our fallen race, while they remain in this imperfect state, yet it intimates strongly our obligation to depart from iniquity, and to aim at universal holiness of heart and life. And it is our rejoicing that He who hath begun a good work in us; that He who hath renewed us in the spirit of our minds, will sanctify us more and more, till we are fitted, through grace, for the glories and pure enjoyments of heaven.

“The faithful in Christ Jesus,” means the same with believers in Christ, who, by their profession, are bound to keep his commandments, to confide in his promises, and entrust their souls to the powerful and saving influence of his unchangeable love.

Observe in the next verse the apostle’s salutation: “Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” The Holy Spirit is not mentioned in this salutation, probably, because it is by his agency that every blessing, of a saving and spiritual nature, is applied to the souls of believers. In the wondrous scheme of man’s redemption, the sacred Scriptures teach us that the Father is the fountain of light and love; the Son, the medium; and the Holy Spirit the efficient agent by whose powerful energy we are made partakers of the great salvation.

Grace and peace are the objects of the apostle’s wish on behalf of the “saints and faithful in Christ Jesus.” These are terms of very comprehensive import. The word *grace* is used in various senses: but, considered in relation to God, its meaning is free and unmerited favour shown to the guilty. As it respects man, it implies all the virtues, and religious affections of the Christian, as reconciliation to God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Divines have distinguished it into *common* and

*special.* Common grace, is what all men have, by which is meant the light of reason, and the dictates of natural conscience. Special grace is peculiar to the pious, and is displayed in the renovation and sanctification of the heart. This is said, and I think very properly, to be irresistible. Because, although it meets with opposition at first, yet as its operation is upon the will as well as the understanding, and as it is the effect of redeeming love, supported by the unalterable purpose of God, including both the end and the means, what can hinder its success? The purpose of the Lord shall stand. The promise has gone forth from the lips of Him, in whom there is no variableness, or shadow of turning: "Thy people *shall* be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth." Psalm, cx. 3. Peace is one of the fruits of the Spirit, and is intimately connected with faith, in the Redeemer:—"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ:" Rom. v. 1. This peace with God, is always accompanied by peace of conscience, and a placable, benevolent, and peaceable disposition towards mankind. Here the apostle's mind seems to have been filled with devout admiration of the loving kindness and tender mercies of the Lord to our guilty race; and he gives vent to his feelings in a strain of the most fervent and devout thanksgiving: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ:" which may be paraphrased thus: "When I set myself to think of the happy state into which you are brought, as true believers in the Son of God, by this glorious dispensation of divine grace, with whatever personal sorrows and afflictions I may be pressed, I

cannot forbear breaking forth into songs of praise. Join with me, therefore, my dear Christian brethren, and let us all say from our hearts, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is now, *through him*, become *our* God and Father, and hath blessed *us*, even all that are partakers of his grace, whether Jews or Gentiles, with every spiritual blessing in Christ; having graciously bestowed upon us, in him, and for his sake, by the operation of his Holy Spirit, whatever may conduce to the happiness of our souls now, whatever may prepare them for eternal glory, and may seal to us the joyful hope of a blessed immortality.”—*Doddridge’s Fam. Expos. in loc.*

Dr. James McKnight understands the phrase “in heavenly places” to mean the visible Church; but as it is expressed, in the original, by a single word, which signifies *heavenlies*, and may relate either to places or things, I prefer the interpretation given by Dr. Doddridge, who says it signifies the sanctifying and saving graces of the Spirit, such as effectual calling, justification by faith, the adoption of children, and the illumination of the Spirit. These, says he, are blessings in the *heavenlies*, or in heavenly *things*, as I would choose to render it, rather than *places*, as they are things that have a manifest relation and respect to heaven, and have a tendency to prepare us for it, and to lead us, not to seek after the enjoyments of this world, but to be conversant about, and to be waiting for those of the heavenly state.”—*Note in loc.*

Having offered this tribute of praise to God for his unspeakable mercies, the apostle proceeds to specify some of these mercies; and the first that he notices, is his *eternal* and *electing love*. It was proper that this should be mentioned first, as it forms the foundation of all the blessings of the new covenant.—“According as he hath chosen us, in

him, i. e. in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him, in love." That we have the doctrine of election in this verse, cannot be disputed. I approach it with awe and reverence, as one of those deep things of God which, in its details, the human mind cannot fully comprehend. It has given occasion to much controversy among Christians. Unfortunately for the subject there has been, by far, too much said and written upon it. Perhaps on no one article of the Christian faith has there been so much darkening of counsel by words without knowledge. Owing, partly to this circumstance, and partly to the pride of the human heart, the name election, has, to many persons, become offensive. The doctrine, however, I conceive, must be admitted by all who acknowledge the perfection of God and the authenticity of the sacred Scriptures. I shall not detain you long on the subject, as I think all that is useful and intelligible upon it, may be said in few words.

The terms elect, election, chosen people, &c., are used, by the sacred writers, in several distinct senses. To prevent confusion of ideas it is proper to notice some of these. When God takes a whole nation into external covenant with himself, by giving them the advantage of revelation as the rule of their belief and practice, while other nations are without it; this is one kind of election. Thus Moses reasons with the Israelites, when he would dissuade them from idolatry and other wicked practices, as you may see in Deuteronomy vii. 6: "For thou art an *holy* people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath *chosen* thee to be a special people unto himself." Secondly, the designation of persons to a particular office either civil or ecclesiastical, is another kind of election. Thus Samuel said to Saul, "See ye him whom the Lord

hath *chosen*?" 1 Sam. x. 24. And our Lord said to his apostles, "Have not I *chosen* you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" John vi. 70. Effectual calling, or that operation of divine grace by which God visibly distinguishes his people from the wicked, is denominated an election, or choosing out of the world; as you find in the gospel according to John xv. 19. But there is still a fourth species of election, which may be defined to be, "That eternal, unconditional, and immutable purpose of God, by which he has chosen some of our fallen race unto everlasting life and glory in Christ Jesus." This, I think, is plainly taught in the verse now before us; nor is this the only passage in which it is to be found. It is frequently mentioned in Scripture. The Saviour taught it—"Father I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am that they may behold my glory." The apostles taught it, believed it, and contemplated it with complacency and joy. Let us not be offended at it. Whatever objections you may have to the name, or the manner of explaining the doctrine, the thing itself must be admitted and believed, unless you reject the testimony of God, and pronounce the gospel of salvation unworthy of credit. Look at the human family fallen into sin, obnoxious to the penalty of God's law;—see them guilty, helpless, and without excuse—you rank yourselves among these guilty, helpless sinners—you feel your need of a Saviour—you despair of being justified by the deeds of the law;—now reject the doctrine of election—suppose God has not chosen any of our miserable race, in Christ, before the foundation of the world, and where is your hope of heaven? The truth is, all your hopes of salvation, whether you acknowledge it in so many words or not, are built upon God's everlasting and electing love and mercy in Christ Jesus.

Indeed it is generally agreed, that there is an election of the pious unto eternal life. Some think, however, that this choice is made in time, and from time to time as they become pious—that it is conditional—that it depends on the will and good behaviour of the elect. This opinion was not entertained by Paul. He says God hath chosen us in Christ, before the world was. That is, that the choice was from eternity. And this, indeed, results necessarily from the perfection of God. With him a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years. He forms no new purposes; if he did, he would be, to-day, what he was not yesterday. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning to the end of that immense plan by which he governs the universe. His knowledge comprehends the whole of his works and designs, *from everlasting to everlasting*. Whatever he does, in time, is according to his eternal purpose. If any of our guilty race are saved, it is because he *chose* to save them. Had none been chosen, none would have been redeemed from the ruins of the fall. All had sinned—all, therefore, might have been left to perish; and if any of us are delivered from the curse of the law, and from the punishment due to our transgressions, we shall, I think, through eternity, as with one voice, ascribe our salvation to the free grace and electing love of God our heavenly Father.

“That we should be holy, and without blame before him in love.” In these words, the apostle unfolds the design, and the sanctifying efficacy of redeeming mercy: “That we should be holy.” That we should be renewed in the spirit of our minds, be rescued from the bondage of sin, a peculiar people, zealous of good works, devoted to the service of our Maker, and Redeemer, feeling and acknowledging that we are not our own; but that

our time, our talents, our influence, our all, are the Lord's. Love to God and man is to rule in our hearts. Thus living and acting, we shall be "without blame before him in love." Freed from the condemnation of the law, we shall have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Cultivating peace with all men, and aiming to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord, we shall be enabled, through grace, to adorn the doctrine of God, our Saviour, in all things. And when this warfare is accomplished, He who has chosen us, in Christ, before the foundation of the world, will receive us to himself, in immortal glory, where we shall admire and adore the grace of him who predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son, and join the ransomed myriads in that impassioned and triumphant doxology—"Unto him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and honour, blessing and dominion, for ever and ever, amen!"



## LECTURE II.

### ADOPTION.

**EPHESIANS, I. 5, 6.**—Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will; to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.

IN contemplating the guilt and misery of our fallen race, it is some relief to the benevolent mind to reflect that God has a people on the earth, whom he acknowledges and treats as children. These are a chosen generation, a peculiar people, elect, according to the foreknowledge of God, predestinated from eternity to the adoption of children, and kept by divine power, through faith unto salvation. Adoption, in civil life, is the receiving of a person



into a family, and admitting him to the natural privileges of a child. It is easy, therefore, to understand what the apostle means by it in relation to God's treatment of penitent and believing sinners. Mankind are all, by nature, the children of wrath, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise. The whole plan of redemption goes upon the principle, that we are a guilty, and, in ourselves, a ruined race. It were absurd to talk of adopting those who were born in the family, and had, consequently, a right to its honours and immunities. But when it is admitted that we have all sinned, and, by sinning, have lost the divine image, together with our claim upon the favour and protection of heaven, the language of our text is not only appropriate, but consolatory: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself." Ungrateful and ill-deserving as we are, God, who is rich in mercy, has not abandoned us. Before the foundation of this rebel world, he had determined to collect from the ruins of the fall a people, for his praise. And the purpose once formed, is not to be defeated. His way is perfect; and his counsel shall stand. The design is from everlasting, but its execution takes place in time, by the influence of his word and spirit, on the hearts of sinners. A great and thorough change is wrought upon those who are destined to the adoption of children. They experience a new and heavenly birth. They are born of God by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." That is, on their believing in Christ, they received a right and title to all the privileges of God's children. "They are no longer the servants of sin, to obey it in the lusts thereof; but being made free from sin, they become the sons

of God without rebuke, and have their fruit unto holiness, and the end, everlasting life."

Observe the way in which the benefits of adoption are bestowed upon us; "By Jesus Christ." It has pleased God the Father to show mercy to sinful men, through the mediation of his Son, the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person; but who, for our salvation became incarnate, was born of a woman, made under the law, and bore our sins in his own body on the cross. We cannot discover all the reasons which gave this mode of redemption the preference in the view of infinite wisdom; several important ends however were obviously answered by it. It exhibits the justice, maintains the authority, and displays the grace of God in a more impressive and effectual manner, as it seems to us, than any other method that could have been devised. Sin is discouraged, the law magnified, and, to the penitent, a foundation is laid for a good hope, through grace. If, then, all spiritual benefits come to us through Jesus Christ, it is plain that faith in him is an indispensable condition of our acceptance with God. United to Christ by faith, we receive the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. God sends forth the spirit of his Son into our hearts, and we come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. By virtue of our union with Christ, we can call God our Father, and humbly claim an interest in his parental care and guidance. Let it be our great concern, then, to be found in Christ. In him the Father is ever well pleased. But to those who are not in him, our God is a consuming fire.

Observe, secondly, the reason which the apostle assigns for God's predestinating believers to the adoption of children; "according to the good pleasure of his will." Indeed, if we admit our guilt and

unworthiness, and acknowledge, what the gospel uniformly teaches, our insufficiency for our own recovery from the sad effects of sin, to be consistent, we must resolve our salvation into the mercy and good pleasure of God. As death was our just desert, our deliverance from it must be by grace. In the dispensation of the gospel, repentance, faith and obedience to the commands of Christ, are required; but these Christian graces are not meritorious, nor are they of ourselves; they are the gifts of God. The whole scheme of redemption is exclusively of God. The gospel by which the way of life is made known to us, is the free gift of God. That we enjoy the light of this gospel, and live under a dispensation of mercy, is entirely owing to the good pleasure of Him who worketh all things, and bestows all blessings after the counsel of his own will. It is the free Spirit of God that awakens the sinner to the concerns of his soul, that excites him to the use of the appointed means of salvation, and makes these means efficacious and effectual. God addresses us in his word as free, but not as independent. We are commanded to work, and are at the same time assured that God works in us. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God gives the increase. This is the case, equally, in secular and religious concerns. In the common affairs of life, our ability to labour and the success of our efforts depend on the support and blessing of Providence. Just so, when we hear, and read, and pray, and meditate, and give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, we are to acknowledge our complete dependence on the grace and blessing of Heaven. As our encouragement to industry and enterprise in worldly business arises from the belief that the providence of God attends us, so our hope of success in seeking eternal life, should be built on the sufficiency and freeness of divine grace.

Nor does the fact that Christ hath bought us with his blood militate against this doctrine; for Christ himself, in his mediatorial capacity is the gift of God's free grace. "God so loved the world, &c. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because he sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." "God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sin, hath quickened us together with Christ, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness to us by Jesus Christ."

Observe, thirdly, the tendency of God's mercy in the salvation of sinners. It is, "to the praise of the glory of his grace." There is singular force and beauty in this expression. Salvation by Jesus Christ is grace—*glorious grace*; grace that commands the praise and admiration of saints and angels. Let the despairing sinner, who trembles under a sense of aggravated guilt, try its efficacy. Grace has done great things. It has saved the chief of sinners. The calls, the warnings and invitations of the gospel are addressed to all men, without distinction or limitation. Where sin has abounded, grace often much more abounds. Let no sinner, therefore, despair of mercy. Be willing to renounce sin, and accept of a gracious pardon, through the merits and mediation of the Son of God, and there is hope concerning you. True, you have nothing of your own to recommend you to the favour and friendship of God; you have made yourself vile; but in Christ Jesus the Lord, you may find every thing you need—pardon, bought with blood, and a righteousness every way answerable to the demand of God's holy law. Trust the grace, then, that offers to save you. Say not that you are excluded by the purpose of God. The purpose of God does not interfere with

his word. Remember, they who are predestinated to the adoption of children, are ordained unto holiness, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you have the sure word of promise for your warrant, that you shall be accepted in the Beloved. If you are a great sinner, your salvation will rebound the more to the praise of God's glorious grace. You know of whom it was said, that "she loved much, because she had been forgiven much." And he who was once a persecutor has left it on imperishable record, as "a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief; howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that, *in me* first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should afterwards believe in him to life everlasting."

We remarked at the beginning of this lecture, that God has a people on earth, towards whom he sustains the relation and acts the part of a Father. Blessed and happy are they who can approach the throne of grace, and say, in truth and sincerity, "Our Father, who art in heaven!" He is the best of Fathers. Be induced, fellow sinners, to cherish towards him a filial affection. No earthly parent has such claims upon your entire confidence and love. Parents frequently injure their children through a defect of knowledge. They know not, in many instances, what is good for them. But our heavenly Father is the *only wise God*. His knowledge is infinite. He knows in all possible cases what is best for his children. And if he does not always gratify their wishes, he nevertheless promotes their ultimate happiness. If he does not give them what they ask, it is because they ask amiss. But whether he gives or withholds, he so sanctifies their enjoyments, and overrules their

afflictions, as to make all things work together for their good. Secondly, God is the best of fathers, because he corrects his children in faithfulness, and with judgment. This is not always the case with earthly parents. The apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, has a remarkable saying on this subject: *They*, says he, i. e. our parents, according to the flesh, verily for a few days chastened us, after their own pleasure; but *He* for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Parents are sometimes severe, passionate, and capricious, in administering correction. They forget that it is a divine ordinance, and ought to be attended to with seriousness and prayer, that it may be blessed to the child's profit. When God corrects, it is from love; not because he takes pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. This is the testimony of David: "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that *in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.*" We sometimes err on the other side; by conniving at the faults of our children, and sparing them to their hurt. Eli was an instance of this weak and wicked fondness. His sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And what was the consequence? It was awful, and it is recorded for our admonition. The maxim of Solomon is a maxim of wisdom and truth: "He that spareth the rod hateth his son." It is a maxim upon which God acts: "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

Thirdly, God is the best of Fathers, because he is constantly with his children; they are never out of his sight, or beyond the reach of his power. This, for various reasons, cannot be said of earthly parents. But the eyes of the Lord are ever upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cries. The Keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.

Of his numerous family, not one is overlooked or neglected. While he governs great worlds, he notices the falling sparrow, and numbers the hairs of our head. Wherever we go, whatever we do or suffer, God is there; not as an idle spectator, but as a father and a friend. He was with Daniel in the lion's den; with the infant Moses in the ark of bulrushes; with John the apostle in the Isle of Patmos; with Paul and Silas in prison, and with the martyrs to give them the victory, while they expired in flames for the testimony of Jesus. O cheering and blessed thought, Christian! your earthly parents are not suffered to continue with you by reason of death; but your heavenly Father lives for ever. You may sing with David, "when my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up;" and with the Church, "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not."

Finally, God is the best of fathers, because his affection for his children is stronger and more permanent than that of any earthly parent. Hear his own words: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee:" "Behold I have engraven thee on the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy upon thee." The love of God, like himself, is unchangeable. On those whom he admits to the adoption of children, he impresses the seal of the everlasting covenant; in which he engages, that he will be their God, and that they shall be his people. "I am persuaded," says Paul, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers,

nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." "Wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved;" i. e. by the influence of his glorious grace, God has made his adopted children acceptable and fit for communion with himself, in or through the beloved Redeemer: beloved, in this place, being obviously applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are said to be in Christ, the Beloved, when we believe in him, and rely upon him alone for salvation, as he is exhibited in the gospel. And here, brethren, you see the way in which you are warranted to hope for the inestimable blessings connected with adoption into the family of God. Whether you are, personally, the objects of Heaven's electing love, and predestination unto eternal life, you are not informed in Scripture; nor can you ascertain it but by a compliance with the gospel terms of salvation. One thing is indubitably certain; you are in God's hand, and entirely at his disposal. You have sinned; and as sinners you deserve punishment. You are liable to the penalty of that holy and immutable law of which sin is the transgression. It is fit, it is immensely important that you should acknowledge and feel this solemn truth. A sense of ill-desert, and of dependence on mere grace, is necessary to prepare you to accept the atonement, and all the rich provisions of mercy. While you refuse to admit the representations of Scripture concerning your guilt, and indulge the hope of rendering yourselves acceptable to God, by your own efforts, you will reject the Saviour, and rejecting him, you must, in your own persons, meet the claims of eternal and inflexible justice. Now, you are taught in Scripture, that no flesh shall be justified by the deeds of the law; and Jesus Christ is set before you in the gospel as the Lord our



righteousness, and the beloved of the Father, in whom you may be made accepted, through faith in his blood. Here is an open door, a good hope, a sure foundation. Enter in at this door. Lay hold of this hope. Venture the entire weight of your immortal concerns on this foundation, and you shall not make haste, or be confounded, world without end. You shall receive the spirit of adoption, with all its immeasurable benefits. God will be your God, and ye shall be his people. The arms of covenanted and immutable love shall encompass you, and you shall in due time be with Christ, and sing, with the myriads of the redeemed, the high, the holy, the triumphant anthem of free grace, through ceaseless ages. Amen!



### LECTURE III.

#### REDEMPTION THROUGH THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.

EPHESIANS, I. 7, 8.—“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.”

REDEMPTION, as it relates to fallen man, is a subject of admiration on earth and in heaven. Taken in its most extended sense, it imports our deliverance from the guilt, the power, the pollution and consequences of sin. It is to this great deliverance, my Christian brethren, that you owe your peace with God, and your hope of eternal life. That your minds may be duly impressed with a sense of its transcendent magnitude, and that you may feel the obligation which it lays you under to live a holy life, give serious attention, if you please, while I endeavour to unfold a few of the leading ideas which it comprises. And here it is important to

remark, that the very notion of redemption presupposes the bondage or captivity of the persons to be redeemed. And this, the Bible teaches us, is actually the condition of man, considered as a transgressor of the divine law. The Creator gave him a holy, just and good law, to be the rule of his duty. This law was guarded and supported by an awful, but rightful penalty: "In the day thou eatest thereof, *dying thou shalt die.*" Now the moment that man violated this solemn interdiction of the great King of heaven and earth, he became a captive to justice. He was arrested, driven out from the propitious presence of his Maker, and held liable to that death which was annexed as the penalty of the law. Hence mankind are represented, in Scripture, as prisoners; as condemned criminals, with the wrath of God abiding on them, until they believe in Christ, and receive pardon and justification through his blood. The apostasy of the human race is proclaimed not only by universal tradition, but by universal sensation. Men may speculate and differ respecting the extent and turpitude of their depravity; but the wide-spreading desolations of sin are felt and acknowledged by all. The sacred Scriptures represent the depravity of man as radical and entire; and ascribe to this total dilapidation of our nature all the physical and moral evils of the world. And it is on the truth of this melancholy fact that the whole scheme of redemption proceeds. "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost"—"to restore liberty to the captives, and open the prison doors to them that were bound." And in order to effect this, a ransom must be paid, proportionate to the injury done to divine justice, and the value of the souls to be redeemed. This is a leading and obvious idea comprised in the doctrine of redemption.

But there are those who, while they admit that

man is a transgressor, profess themselves unable to discern the necessity of such an expensive and mysterious satisfaction as that which the New Testament reveals. What then? Is man's defect of intellectual discernment to pass for proof that God is unrighteous, or that the testimony of Scripture is unworthy of credit? The truth is, we are not, and perhaps it may be impossible, in this imperfect state, to make us thoroughly acquainted with the nature of the case. It ill becomes us, therefore, to presume to decide, peremptorily, what would be a sufficient satisfaction to divine justice. Punishments should be apportioned to the different degrees of crime; and the turpitude of a crime is to be ascertained by the goodness and majesty of the law violated, together with the extent and magnitude of the interests concerned. Now the law of God, as must be allowed from the perfection of the Legislator, possesses, in an eminent degree, the attributes of benignity, wisdom, and purity. And it is not a mere municipal or local provision; nor is it to be temporary in its authority. Its obligation bears on all ranks and descriptions of moral beings, from the seraph to the Hottentot; and it is to continue in force through eternal ages. "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass than for one tittle of the law to fail." The transgression of such a law must be a crime of no ordinary magnitude. In our way of speaking of infinitude, we need not hesitate to pronounce it an infinite evil. And had it been pardoned and passed by, without an equal satisfaction, no finite mind can calculate the probable ill effects of such a connivance, on the moral government of God.

Now it is perfectly evident that fallen man, so far from being able to make an adequate atonement to insulted justice, could render no satisfaction whatever for his past offences. Every intelligent crea-

ture is bound by the law of his moral nature to yield perpetual and undeviating obedience to the will of the Creator. No imperfect creature, therefore, can make reparation to the law even for his own sins, much less for those of his fellow sinners. Nor could any intermediate being, between God and man, render an acceptable sacrifice, or one which would bear any just proportion to the value of that vast multitude of immortal souls predestinated to eternal life. What finite being, what angel, what angelic order of beings combined, could have sustained the sins or vouched for the future safety of an elect world? Milton has a fine idea, finely expressed on this point, where he represents the Almighty as announcing, in heaven, the fall of man, and making inquiry for a redeemer. But amid all the thrones, and dominions, and powers of the upper world, none could be found of sufficient courage, benignity and merit to undertake the arduous work.

“ Say, heavenly powers, where shall we find such love?  
 Which of you will be mortal to redeem  
 Man’s mortal crime? and just the unjust to save?  
 Dwells in all heaven charity so dear?  
 He asked, but all the heavenly choir stood mute  
 And silence was in heaven: on man’s behalf  
 Patron or intercessor none appeared,  
 Much less that durst upon his own head draw  
 The deadly forfeiture, and ransom set.  
 And now, without redemption, all mankind  
 Must have been lost, adjudged to death and hell,  
 By doom severe, had not the Son of God,  
 In whom the fulness dwells of love divine,  
 His dearest mediation thus renewed.

Father, thy word is past; man shall find grace;  
 And shall grace not find means, that finds her way,  
 The speediest of thy winged messengers,  
 To visit all thy creatures, and to all  
 Comes unprevented, unimplored, unsought?  
 Happy for man, so coming; he her aid  
 Can never seek, once dead in sins and lost;  
 Atonement for himself or offering meet,  
 Indebted and undone, hath none to bring.

Behold me then : me for him ; life for life  
 I offer ; on me let thine anger fall ;  
 Account me man ; I for his sake will leave  
 Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee  
 Freely put off, and for him lastly die  
 Well pleased" —————

Yes, Immanuel, combining in his mysterious person the unsearchable glories of the Godhead with all the amiable attributes of uncorrupted humanity, is at once the ransomer and the ransom. He paid "the price all price beyond"—"the rigid satisfaction—life for life." "Ye know," says the apostle Peter, "that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb, without blemish and without spot." 1 Peter i. 18. "We have redemption through his blood"—"The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all—by his stripes we are healed." But why should the innocent suffer for the guilty? To this objection, let it be well observed, that the law of suretiship is not peculiar to the Christian scheme of redemption. It is a law which pervades the sensitive creation; and Christianity is not accountable for its equity. The child suffers for the crime of the parent—diseases of the body, ignorance, and penury, no less than the native maladies of the soul, are entailed. Here the sufferings of the innocent are involuntary. And it is an inscrutable difficulty common to natural and revealed religion. In regard to vicarious pains endured voluntarily, the objection loses all its force. The royal father, who parted with one of his own eyes to save one for a guilty son who had forfeited both to the law of the land, has been extolled for his wisdom and magisterial firmness, no less than for his compassion and parental affection. Our blessed Redeemer's humiliation and passion were *voluntary*; and, as he endured them without utterly perishing, the universe sustained no loss, but im-

mense advantages. The law of the Lord was magnified, sin condemned, a world saved, the tempter discomfited, the end for which man was made secured, the entire system of divine attributes displayed, and the whole resulting in an interminable tribute of praise to him who sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb, for ever and ever!

That he, through whose blood we have redemption, suffered for us freely and of choice, take his own testimony: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep; I *lay down* my life, that I may take it again: no man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." John x. 17, 18. "He hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." That body which he assumed, he gave to be broken on the cross; but having purged our sins, having by the once offering of himself, for ever perfected them that are sanctified, he, as God over all blessed for ever, resumed the life which he had freely resigned. He rose, he ascended to the right hand of the Majesty in heaven, where he is now enthroned to give repentance and remission of sins. "We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

The forgiveness of sins includes two things, viz: The removal of our guilt, or liableness to punishment, and the sanctification of our hearts. The former, through the righteousness of Christ, accepted by faith, constitutes our title to heaven; the latter, our meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. These two things we must have, or we cannot be saved. Now Christ, by suffering the sentence pronounced on fallen man, took away the guilt of his people; he being spotless and undefiled,

such an high priest as became us. He hath reconciled us to God by his cross, having slain the enmity. In his mediatorial person and work, the parties are brought together. The flaming sword is removed, the devouring fires are quenched, justice is appeased, heaven is placable, accessible, propitious. But still the captive is in bonds, and in love with his chains. The prison doors are opened; but the prisoner has no disposition to go forth and be free. This is the other grievous evil of our case; and for this also there is provision made in the gospel plan for the forgiveness of sins. The great deliverer apprehends the captive, leads him forth, takes off his chains, gives him a new heart and a right spirit; and thus the reconciliation is completed. The result is—"Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, and good will toward men!"

"According to the riches of his grace, wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." The whole scheme of redeeming love is in pursuance of God's gracious designs towards our fallen race. The grace of God means the favour which he shows to the unworthy; and the language here used, is designed to indicate its infinite fulness and sufficiency: "The riches of his grace," as manifested in the gospel of Christ, are offered freely, and urged upon the acceptance of all who feel their sin and misery. Here is a treasury from which all our wants may be supplied, and that, in a way admirably adapted to promote the glory of God, and the happiness of those who put their trust in him, and honour him, by accepting the blessings of his love, through faith in his son, Jesus Christ. "Wherein," i. e. in which riches of his grace, "he hath abounded toward us," says the apostle, "in all wisdom and prudence." That is, the scheme of redemption, through the blood of

Christ, is wise and safe, in all its bearings on the government of God, and the interests of ransomed sinners. The great problem is solved—How shall man, fallen man, be just with God? The law is thus maintained in all its majesty; the claims of truth and justice are vindicated, while the sinner is saved and sanctified; sin is discountenanced, and “grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life.” This is the peculiar and distinctive glory of the gospel: nay, it is the gospel itself in substance; the one great and long desired disclosure of the love divine that passeth knowledge; the effective propitiation for sin; and the only safe ground of hope to our ruined race. Let us cling to it with unwavering faith and devout thankfulness. It is Heaven’s own device, for securing God’s glory in man’s recovery from the sad and otherwise inevitable consequences of our common apostasy. It is the harmonious action of the divine attributes, in opening a fountain of life and peace to the chief of sinners; a fountain of healing waters, accessible and available to all, “without money and without price:” so that they who die in their sins, are their own destroyers. They will not come to Christ, that they may have life. “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.”

And it is worthy of special notice, that, in this glorious plan of redemption, provision is made for the regeneration of the redeemed. Men are saved, not in their sins, but from them. The heart is changed by the Spirit, the sinner is humbled in the dust, the law is approved, as holy, just, and good, and the confiding soul is sweetly drawn along, in wisdom’s peaceful and pleasant ways, by the attractive influence of truth and grace, to God, and holiness, and heaven.



It is also to be borne in mind, that this great salvation, free and all-sufficient though it be, is not forced upon any one. It is necessarily limited in its application by the terms on which it is offered. True, the terms are brought down to our circumstances; they are—Believe and be saved; look and live; wash and be clean: but they must be complied with. “Christ is all, and in all.” Our guilt and helpless misery must be felt and confessed; and, in view of the case, as it is, we must be willing to be saved in God’s own way, to the praise of his name and grace. Hear the word of invitation, then, all ye people: “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ends of the earth; for I am God, and besides me there is no Saviour.” “The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin—neither is there salvation in any other.”



## LECTURE IV.

EPHESIANS, I. 9, 10.—“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together, in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him.”

THESE words have a manifest connection with the third verse of this chapter. Indeed, all that is said from the third to the fourteenth verse inclusive, forms but one sentence. Frequent instances of long sentences occur in the writings of the apostle Paul. And, in order to understand several passages in his epistles, it is necessary to attend to this circumstance, as it constitutes one of the characteristics of his style. If we read the beginning of the sentence in immediate connection with our text, leaving out the intervening verses, the sense will be obvious. It will then run thus: “Blessed be the God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ—having made known unto us the mystery of his will," &c. We will endeavour, by a series of observations, to unfold the meaning of our text, and then conclude with such practical reflections as the subject may suggest.

1. "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will."—The gospel of Christ is here called the mystery of God's will; probably, with some allusion to the mysteries of pagan worship, so famous in Ephesus, and among the ancient Greeks and Romans generally, till their absurdity was exposed by the light of Christianity. This allusion shows that the apostle wrote his epistles at the time, and in the part of the world in which they are believed, by Christians, to have been written; and we are thus furnished, incidentally, with incontrovertible evidence of the truth and authenticity of these sacred records. The gospel is styled the mystery of God's will; not because its doctrines are unintelligible, or are intended to be kept secret like the grand mysteries of heathen worship. The apostle says expressly, God hath made known, or revealed to us, this mystery; which supposes it to be intelligible, so far at least, as is necessary to faith, and an intelligent and sound practice. The idea designed to be conveyed by the term *mystery*, in this place is, that the gospel scheme of redemption through the blood of Christ, was above the conception of men and angels, and could be made known to the world only by divine revelation. This stupendous method of restoring sinners to the favour of God, their offended Creator, is elsewhere called *the wisdom of God, in a mystery*. And nowhere is there to be found such a bright display of the divine perfections. The salvation of sinners required the combined and harmonious exercise of

justice, mercy, and truth. These divine attributes meet and shine with peculiar effulgence in the face of Jesus Christ. And his exalted character, connected with his humble birth, his ignominious death and glorious resurrection, forms the great mystery of the gospel. A mystery it is, confessedly. That he who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, should be born of a woman—that He whom heaven adores, and by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice, should become a man of sorrows, and give his life a ransom for sinners, is “what the angels desire to look into.” It is a dispensation of grace and justice which no finite mind can fully comprehend. We receive it on the testimony of God. He has revealed it to us, not as a subject of curious speculation, but as a matter of faith. May he vouchsafe unto us the influence of his Spirit, to enable us to receive the message of his mercy with devout admiration of the manner in which he has been pleased to show his compassionate regard for our fallen race. “God commendeth his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” “Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” 1 Tim. iii. 16.

The mysteriousness of some of the doctrines of the gospel ought not to be alleged as a sufficient reason for rejecting them. To short-sighted mortals, creation and providence, no less than revelation, abound in mysteries. It is a maxim with some men to believe nothing which they cannot comprehend. But really this maxim is unphilosophical, as well as unchristian; and whoever adheres to it rigidly must be both an atheist and a sceptic. Many things in physical science are as

completely above the reach of the human understanding as are any of the doctrines of the Bible. The religion of nature, as it has been called by some who discredit the doctrines of the gospel, is not without its mysteries. To give an instance: the omnipresence of the Deity is just as much of a mystery as the incarnation and death of our divine and ever blessed Redeemer. I believe both, though I do not fully understand either. The belief of both is useful. The one comforts me in affliction and arms me with courage and strength in the hour of temptation; the other forms the basis of my hope of pardon and acceptance with God my Maker.

Let us, then, be thankful for the knowledge of God's will respecting our salvation. God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Let us bless him for the marvellous display of his love and mercy through the mediation of his only begotten Son. It is, no doubt, with special reference to the mediatorial office of Christ, that the gospel is styled the mystery of God's will. And let it be solemnly considered that this mystery is made known to us, in order that we may receive it as worthy of all acceptation; that, resting on the same word of testimony, we may have a good hope through grace. That we may have redemption through the blood of Christ, is at once the most mysterious and the most precious doctrine of the New Testament. Remove this article of our holy faith, and Christianity is no longer a religion that suits a sinner. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission; but the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. To the cavils of self-sufficiency and worldly wisdom, the Christian's reply is, "I know not, nor does it concern me to know, *in what manner* the sacrifice of Christ is connected with the forgiveness of sins; it is enough that this is declared by God to be the medium

through which my salvation is effected. I pretend not to dive into the councils of the Almighty. I submit to his wisdom; and I will not reject his grace because his mode of bestowing it is beyond my comprehension. I accept with thankfulness the benefits of redemption, and God, in Christ Jesus, shall have the undivided glory of my salvation. My grateful song is now, and ever shall be, 'O, to grace, how great a debtor!'"

2d. Observe, this mystery of God's will is made known to us, not on account of any worthiness in us or any of our guilty race, but "according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself." It is wholly owing to God's gracious purpose that a revelation of his will has been given to the world. That we were born in a Christian land; that we are distinguished from those nations that sit in darkness, and beneath the shadow of death; that the gospel was not published sooner; that the knowledge of it is not yet universal, are facts which must be resolved into the good pleasure of our God, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." And though the reasons of his conduct, in these and many similar dispensations, are not made known to us, yet we know, and this is enough for us to know, "that justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne, and righteousness and truth go before him." To those who enjoy the gospel, it is the gift of God's free grace. God, in the bestowment of his favours, acts as a sovereign. This is a doctrine taught, not only in the Bible, but in creation and providence. You cannot look on the face of the earth, or observe the diversified and unequal circumstances of mankind, without acknowledging that the Lord gives good things to whomsoever, and in what measure soever, he pleases. One section of the globe is fertile, another sterile; one portion of the earth is scorched

with a perpendicular sun, another bound up in perpetual frost; here the pestilence wastes at noon-day; there, it is healthful, the air pure and the seasons regular; one country is destined to be the theatre of war, with its nameless evils, another, the abode of peace and its attendant comforts; one race of men are endowed with superior intellectual powers, while another seems to possess little more than mere animal instinct. Do not these facts clearly prove that God does all things, and confers all blessings according to the good pleasure of his will? And if he is free in the distribution of temporal advantages, is he not equally free in regard to things spiritual and eternal? Is it unjust in him to bestow certain privileges on some, which he withholds from others, when none can claim them as a matter of right? He is no more bound to place all men under equal religious advantages than to endow all persons with equal natural abilities, or to make men equal to angels. One thing, however, is certain, and it merits special attention—to whom much is given, of them much will be required. In the day of final retribution, the Judge of all the earth will take into account men's various abilities, opportunities and advantages; and every one will receive a just recompense of reward. "As many as have sinned without law, shall perish without law; and as many as have sinned under the law will be judged by the law, in that day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to the gospel." Let us, then, be thankful that God has distinguished us from a large portion of our fallen race by the lights, the hopes and consolations of the gospel. We are assured by the word of prophecy that the heathen are to be given to Christ for an inheritance; that the knowledge of the Lord shall pervade the whole earth; and we should be ready, on all occasions, to contribute our

part to the diffusion of evangelical light among them that are perishing for lack of vision. But let us remember that if we neglect the price put into our hands; if we open not our hearts to receive the truth as it is in Jesus, we judge ourselves unworthy of eternal life; we neglect the great salvation; and how shall we escape, in that day when God shall call us to an account for the high privileges and great advantages by which he has distinguished us? "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

Observe, thirdly, the great end for which God has made known to our world the mystery of his will—"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together, in one, all things, in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him." This language is figurative. The figure is taken from the conduct of a steward, who distributes to those who belong to the household such things as they need, and, in the manner prescribed by his lord. The Church is the house of God; God himself the Master of the family; Christ, in his mediatorial capacity, is the Steward who governs the house; and those spiritual blessings, mentioned in the third verse of this chapter, are the good things which he distributes. These treasures of divine grace had been opened to but few, and dispensed but sparingly, under former dispensations; the more full communication of them being reserved till the fulness of time. That is, till the time appointed for the advent of the Messiah, according to promise, when, by the promulgation of the gospel, the ends of the earth should be called upon to look to him and be saved—"That he might gather together in one." The expression signifies, literally, to recapitulate, as public speakers sometimes do, with a view to present what they

have said in a succinct and impressive manner. Thus all former prophecies, promises, types and shadows, met and received their consummation in Christ. The phrase, also, signifies to collect things that were before scattered, and to unite them under a common head—all things in Christ. In this, as in several other passages, I understand by *all things*, all the persons whom God intends to collect into one holy and happy society, under Christ, who is made head over all things for the Church—"Both which are in heaven, and which are on earth." On this passage, commentators have conjectured variously. According to some, the things in heaven mean the Jews, and the things on earth the Gentiles. Others understand saints in glory, and believers of all nations on earth. A third class tell us that by things in heaven, is intended, not only the redeemed from among men, but angels also, whose happiness is confirmed and secured by virtue of Christ's mediation. There is some truth in all these opinions; and the difference between any two of them is not great. As to the influence which the mediation of Christ may have had upon the angelic hosts, we know nothing with certainty. We know they are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation; they rejoice at the repentance of a sinner, and they acknowledge and adore Christ, as Lord, to the glory of God the Father; for when the first-begotten made his appearance on earth, it was said, "Let all the angels of God worship him." Heb. i. 6.

We are taught in this passage to regard the Church of Christ as composed of all the pious in heaven and earth. Those who are now in glory were saved in the same way that we are to be saved, by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ. Those of them who died before the Saviour's appearance in the flesh, had but an obscure and imperfect knowledge of the mystery of



God's will. The Redeemer was exhibited to them through the medium of types and sacrifices. Their advantages were far inferior to ours; yet confiding in the sure word of testimony they died in faith, and now inherit the promises. Let us take encouragement from the success of those who have gone before us; the sacrifice of the cross availed to their salvation. The Redeemer's blood has washed away the sins of thousands; and it has lost none of its efficacy. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever, is all-sufficient. Accessions are constantly making to the number of his sincere and happy followers. Encompassed as we are by a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run, with patience, the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Heb. xii. 1, 2.



## LECTURE V.

EPHESIANS, I. 11—14.—In whom we also have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will; that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ: in whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

THE church in Ephesus was composed partly of Jews and partly of Gentiles. Paul being a Jew by birth, ranks himself with his countrymen, and gives thanks to God that some of them had obtained an interest in the Redeemer, though the nation, as such,

had rejected him, and were now suffering the fearful consequences of their unbelief. Hence the expression, "in whom we also have obtained an inheritance," or lot, as it might be rendered. The figure is taken from the distribution of the land of Canaan to the several tribes by lot, the whole disposal of which, as Solomon teaches us, is of the Lord; and which, when used religiously, may perhaps be used lawfully. By this allusion, the apostle seems to have meant to remind his brethren, the Jewish converts, that it was not owing to their merit or comparative goodness, that they had been admitted to a participation in the blessings of the gospel. He intended to teach them their obligations to free grace; that acknowledging their dependence on God and highly appreciating their privileges, they might have compassion on the ignorant, and seek the peace and harmony of the Church by treating the Gentile converts as brethren in Christ, members of the same household, and heirs of the same inheritance. And this is an important idea, and deserves to be remembered and acknowledged to the praise of glorious grace. Ye who possess most of the Christian temper, and enjoy the clearest evidences of your lot in the heavenly inheritance, what have you that you have not received? Every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of light. Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenant of peace, children of wrath, even as others, dead in trespasses and sins, what was there in you to attract the favourable notice of Heaven? When you call to mind your stupidity and indifference about divine things, are you not forced to ascribe your change of character and prospects to the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, who, according to the good pleasure of his will, hath begotten you again, to a lively hope through grace? "Who maketh thee to

differ?" is a question that paralyses self-sufficiency, and refutes the claims of spiritual pride. Learn, then, Christian, to refer your graces to the proper source;—bear with the failings and infirmities of the weak; pity the ignorant; pray for the obstinate; and be gentle towards all men.

“That we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ.”—The apostle continues his address to his kinsmen, according to the flesh, in this verse; in which he aims to stimulate them to a pious and exemplary manner of life, from the consideration that they had been brought to trust in Christ first; i. e. before any other people. As they were the first fruits of the gospel harvest, it therefore behooved them to exhibit an attractive and commanding example, that others, seeing their good works, might be induced to glorify God by abandoning their idols, and attaching themselves to the Christian standard. That the first disciples of Christ were collected from among the Jews is a well known fact. The Redeemer came first to the lost and scattered sheep of the house of Israel. To them, chiefly, he devoted his personal ministry. From among them he selected his apostles; and in Ephesus, as in several other places, the first converts to the Christian faith were of those who waited for the Messiah, whom their ritual had shadowed forth, and their prophets announced, as the consolation of Israel and the Saviour of the world. It is with reference to this fact that the apostle speaks of the Jews as having first trusted in Christ. He reminds them that, in this respect, they had been peculiarly favoured, and that they were consequently under peculiar obligations to live to the praise and glory of God. May not this idea of our apostle be brought to bear on some of us? Does it not furnish a subject of self-examination to those of us who have long had a standing in the Church? In

every Christian community there are some, who, in comparison of others, may be said to have first trusted in Christ; some who have for years enjoyed the privileges, and indulged the hopes of God's people; and to whom younger and less experienced brethren in the Lord are looking up for example, counsel, and encouragement. Such may reasonably be expected to exhibit an engaging and instructive model of faith and practice. To such the young have a right to look for the practical influence and sanctifying efficacy of the gospel. "The path of the just is as the dawning light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Prov. iv. 18. True religion is of a progressive nature. When they who have been long in the service of Christ give a good report respecting the ways of wisdom; when their conduct proves that religion is something more than a name; that faith is a vital, sanctifying, and operative principle, God is glorified, the gospel is honoured, and all thoughtful and candid men are compelled to admit, that a religion which produces such effects is worth possessing. The reverse of this is deplorable. Alas, that it should ever be realized. A Laodicean spirit has always been too common; it has done incalculable mischief in the Church. And it becomes us to look to God, and entreat him to strengthen the things that remain, but which seem ready to die. Let us beware of a heedless dependence on our profession. The form of godliness is good in its place; but without the spirit and power, it is but a lifeless carcass, a temple without the ark of the covenant, the shechina, or mercy-seat. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." In this verse, the apostle addresses himself to the

Gentile converts, and congratulates them on their having also obtained an inheritance, and reposed their trust in Christ. Observe, here, the vast importance of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In him are treasured up all the blessings of the new covenant. He is the same precious Saviour to the Greek as to the Jew. Having broken down the middle wall of partition, and by the once offering of himself on the cross made atonement for sin, he proffers pardon and eternal life to a guilty world through faith in his blood. Our faith is demanded on the testimony of the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation. The word of God furnishes a sufficient warrant for our entire confidence. The divine record is clear and unequivocal: "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son:" "He that believeth, shall be saved:" "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." With these express declarations of the word of truth before him, every individual of mankind may say, confidently, If I believe I shall be saved; God cannot deny himself; he has revealed himself to me as the Lord God, merciful and gracious; I have no righteousness, but "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" I am guilty; my sin is great and aggravated, but the word of truth proclaims, "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." In short, I find in Christ all that I need; may I not, then, repose my trust and confidence in him without fear of disappointment? And why may not every sinner thus lay hold of the hope set before him in the gospel? Can any other reason be given for the sinner's ruin than that which the Saviour himself gives, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life!" We have the same word of truth; we hear the same gospel of salvation which the Ephesians heard, and on hearing which they trusted in Christ and found

mercy. Their faith was not in vain; God fixed his seal upon them, and gave them a pledge of good things to come: "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance." This branch of our subject merits special attention, as it affords us a criterion by which to judge of our interest in Christ. I need not waste your time by explaining very minutely the import of every expression in the passage. The language is figurative; but the figure is easily understood, and its force and propriety must be felt by every one. The use of seals for the purpose of distinguishing property, is a custom of ancient date. A seal applied to any yielding substance with sufficient force leaves its likeness. Hence the apostle's idea in relation to believers. On those who embrace the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, God impresses his seal and claims them for his own. And to those who are thus distinguished, the impression which the seal makes, is an earnest or pledge of eternal life. In this important affair we may notice distinctly the efficient agent, the seal, and the subject sealed. The agent is the Divine Spirit, here called the Holy Spirit of promise, or promised Spirit. He was promised, not only to the apostles, on whom his sacred influences were copiously poured out on the day of Pentecost to qualify them for the duties of their office, but promised to all the followers of Christ in all periods of the Church, as their sanctifier, guide, and comforter. The word of truth is the seal. The sacred Scriptures are very properly called a transcript of God's moral character. And by the image of God, in which man was created, and which it is the grand design of the gospel to restore to the human soul, I understand a character made up of qualities resembling the moral perfections of the Deity. These qualities which charac-

terize the disciples of Christ are pointed out in the word of God. The heart, therefore, being the subject to be sealed, the Divine Spirit works in it, and impresses upon it those dispositions which God approves and requires in his people. The result is, the image of God impressed upon the heart of the believer. The spirit takes of the things of Christ and seals them on the mind, by giving them a deep impression and abiding influence. "Hence believers are said to be saved, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." And it is because they possess those dispositions, desires, and views, which the gospel commends, and which were so illustriously exemplified in the person of our blessed Saviour, that they are said to be made partakers of a divine nature—to have put off the old man with his deeds, and to have put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.

We have before said this article was entitled to special attention, as it furnished us with a criterion by which to judge of our interest in Christ. And this is a matter of no ordinary importance. What constitutes the Christian character, or wherein does true religion consist? is a question on which professors of the gospel are not exactly agreed. According to some, if a person is baptized, leads a moral life, comes to the Lord's table, and attends regularly on the other institutions of the gospel, he is a Christian, and has a right to consider himself such. Others there are who run into the opposite extreme, pay little or no regard to the positive institutes of God's house, but make religion consist in certain strong persuasions, inexplicable impulses, effected in some extraordinary manner;—as by dreams, visions, voices, secret whispers, or perhaps by opening opportunely to a remarkable passage of Scripture as a sort of lottery. Against both these

schemes there lie, in our apprehension, serious objections. The former seems to substitute the form of godliness in the place of its power—to mistake the means for the end. The latter, to say the best of it, is dubious, if not fanatical; and it is manifestly wanting in some standard of truth, by which to try the spirits, and determine what impressions are from above, and what from beneath; or, in other words, to distinguish the emotions of God's Spirit from the suggestions of satan. But if the view just given of the passage of Scripture now before us be correct, then may we ascertain with a good degree of certainty what spirit we are of. In the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, the dispositions of God's people are described: these dispositions or qualities are the same now that they were in the apostolic age; they will be the same till the redemption of the purchased possession, i. e. till all that the Redeemer has bought with his blood shall be brought home to glory. If therefore, we, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, find ourselves influenced by those principles and dispositions which the gospel describes as the fruits of faith, and the marks of saintship, we may fairly conclude that we are of God, for these impressions correspond to his seal. The likeness answers to the original. The image is not yet complete; for sanctification is a gradual work; but you are assured by the infallible word of truth, that he who hath begun a good work in you will carry it on till the day of Jesus Christ. To them that walk uprightly God gives both grace and glory. Yes, Christians, if you hate sin and love holiness, if you take pleasure in the word, the ordinances, and providence of God—if you thirst after righteousness, and esteem the light of God's countenance above the treasures of earth—if you regard with complacency the household of faith, and cherish a



spirit of good-will towards all men—if you renounce all confidence in the flesh, and desire to be found in the righteousness and saved through the atonement and merits of the Lord Jesus, you have better evidence of your interest in the covenant of mercy, than if you were endowed with miraculous powers, or heard an angel proclaiming from heaven, that your names were in the book of life. You have the earnest of your inheritance; nay, more, you have part of the inheritance itself. Those graces of the Spirit which now influence your hearts are the buddings of glory—the first fruits—the foretastes of that fulness of joy which awaits you in heaven. Blessed are they who can perceive on their minds, tempers and practice, those traces of a divine influence, which the Holy Scriptures assure us are the distinguishing characteristics of God's children! Have you all been sealed by that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance? Some of you have, and you ought to acknowledge what the Lord has done for you, and give him the glory which is due to his name, and his grace. But such of you, as find yourselves destitute of those moral features which go to constitute the new man in Christ, have need to be alarmed at your condition. You tread on slippery ground, and if you turn not to the strong hold, provided for prisoners of hope, you will slide, in due time, into those dire abodes, where the fire is not quenched, and where the worm dieth not. Nothing but the flaxen thread of this frail, dying life, keeps you from sinking into the bottomless pit. Be admonished, then, before you get beyond the reach of redeeming mercy, to lay hold on the hope set before you in the gospel.

## LECTURE VI.

EPHESIANS, I. 15—23.—Wherefore I, also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

THIS passage of Holy Scripture contains such a variety of ideas, that a discourse founded upon it must necessarily be wanting in unity. This quality, however, though essential to a finished sermon, is not always to be expected in a lecture; the design of which is, to unfold the meaning of the sacred text in a plain and practical manner. In conformity with this design we proceed to observe,

First: Paul's tender concern for the spiritual welfare of these Ephesian converts. He had formerly laboured among them in word and doctrine. He had founded their church, and had seen with joy the work of the Lord prosper in his hands. And when Providence called him to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ elsewhere, he warned them of the dangers by which they would be assailed, in his absence. Regarding him as their spiritual father, they would doubtless avail themselves of every opportunity to give him information respecting the progress of the gospel, and the conduct of

those who professed it. This information appears to have been of the pleasing kind, which accounts for what he tells them in the beginning of our text, "Wherefore I, also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." This epistle was written about five years after the apostle had been last at Ephesus. During this period many individuals had, doubtless, joined the communion of the church there, with whom he had no personal acquaintance; but as they had now become members of the household of faith, he loved them, and remembered them affectionately at the throne of grace. Remark here, in passing, the spirit of genuine piety. It regards with complacency all those who love the Saviour; and in this, true concern for the glory of God and the salvation of souls may be distinguished from bigotry, or that sectarian zeal which would confine our prayers and charities within the pale of our own sect. Paul, while a prisoner at Rome, and at the distance of several hundred miles, rejoiced and gave thanks to God on hearing of the success of the gospel at Ephesus. And who, that loves the cause of Christ, would not rejoice and praise the Lord for the outpouring of the Spirit, and the revival of religion in any part of the world? To the real Christian no news is so acceptable or interesting as that which relates to the prosperity of the Church. Two graces are here specified as possessed by these Ephesian Christians, and for which the apostle gives thanks on their behalf, viz. faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to the saints. These are kindred qualities, and they are distinguishing characteristics of all true Christians. They are inseparable graces of the Holy Spirit. They are the gifts of God; and whoever has been brought to believe in Christ and love his followers, is bound to

give God continual thanks. This we are bound to do, not only for ourselves, but for others; as the apostle did for the Ephesians. When we see or hear of any of our guilty race turning from the error of their ways, and pressing into the kingdom of heaven, we have abundant cause of thankfulness to Him who worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. The gospel owes its success entirely to that divine efficiency which attends it, and by which it is made the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. From the apostle's expression, "I cease not to give thanks for you," we may fairly infer that he had his stated seasons of devotion; for it is not to be supposed that he was always actually giving thanks, or praying for them. He seems to have followed the custom of the Jews, who had their morning and evening sacrifice. And as this was called the continual *burnt-offering*, so they were said, Exod. xxix. 42, to serve God instantly day and night: and the disciples, Acts xxvi. 7, were said to be continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. It is in this sense I understand the expression before us, as also his exhortation to the Thessalonians, "Pray without ceasing." We have, here, apostolic authority and example for worshipping God morning and evening in our closets and families. Let those who would grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, snatch from the busy concerns of the world a few minutes at the opening and close of each day, for religious service. It is equally a duty and a privilege—a profitable and delightful exercise.

"Making mention of you in my prayers." The apostle mingles prayer with his thanksgiving for the disciples at Ephesus. He knew that they were still imperfect, and that their perseverance in the faith and practice of the gospel depended on help to be obtained of God. And the case is not altered;

whatever may be our attainments in religion, we are yet far from the stature of a perfect man in Christ. We need blessings which none but God can give, and which he ordinarily gives in answer to prayer. What, then, is Paul's request to God on behalf of these Ephesian Christians? "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened." God, the Father, is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the character of Mediator. This the Saviour himself has taught us: "Go," says he to Mary, "and tell my disciples that I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." John xx. 17. "The Father of glory." This title of the Divine Being indicates that he is the fountain of excellence and the source of happiness. He is elsewhere styled "The Father of lights," and light itself. Under these characters, then, we are to approach him in the name of the Lord Jesus, praying that he would give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation; i. e. that he would give us more enlarged and just views of his glorious perfections, that we may thereby be brought to respect his authority, reverence his law, and admire his grace; "the eyes of our understanding being enlightened." This divine illumination is to be sought for, to the end that we may contemplate more thankfully and profitably the objects of hope to which the gospel calls us, the rich glories of the inheritance which it promises, and the power of God, displayed in fitting us for, and putting us in possession of this inheritance. The devout and attentive contemplation of these objects cannot fail to interest and elevate our affections. The gospel calls us to hope for pardon, sanctification, and eternal life, through the merits of our Redeemer. It holds out to the pious a promise

of grace here, and glory hereafter. The inheritance which, the gospel informs us, is reserved for the saints in heaven, is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading. It is represented by the most lively and attractive emblems that nature or art affords. And still, it is acknowledged by the inspired penman, to be indescribable, and, to minds that see only as through a glass, darkly, inconceivable. Who that meditates piously and believingly on these high and important objects of our faith and hope, can be any longer satisfied with the unsubstantial and fleeting pleasures of sin? Who that aspires to glory, honour, and immortality, can submit to the misrule of depraved passions, or indulge any longer those lusts which war against the soul? Who that considers well the hope of his calling, and the riches of his heavenly inheritance, can hesitate to lay aside every weight, to resist every besetting sin, and press onward to the mark of perfection in holiness? I apprehend it is in great measure for want of duly considering the hope of our calling, and the glory of that inheritance which our blessed Lord has promised his people, that we are so inactive and listless in the cause of God and goodness.

Let every one, then, who cherishes a hope of heaven chide his languid spirit, and call upon God to strengthen the things that remain, but which seem ready to die. Is it possible, that they for whom the Saviour died, and for whom he is preparing an eternal weight of glory, can be indifferent about that glory? Is it possible, that they who hold themselves redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, should feel little or no concern for the honour of their merciful Redeemer? It ought not so to be. The obligations of redeeming love ought to be felt and acknowledged by a life of piety and devotedness to God our Saviour. O, Christian, ponder, and consider well the hope of your calling!

Think of the glory of your inheritance. And let me call upon you to set your affections on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth. Equally wonderful and worthy of thankful acknowledgment is "the exceeding greatness of God's power to us-ward who believe," displayed in preparing us for and putting us in possession of this glorious inheritance; for we who are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, could never rise from death to life and hope, by our own unassisted efforts. It is by a divine energy that any of our fallen and miserable race are renewed in the spirit of our minds, and prepared unto glory. And the same power which breathes into us the breath of spiritual life, is needful to guide and protect us while on earth, to support us when we die, and raise and immortalize these corruptible bodies, and fashion them after the model of the Saviour's glorious body. We are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. And we have the fullest assurance that "if the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in us, he will also quicken our mortal bodies by his spirit which dwelleth in us." Rom. viii. 11. To establish our confidence in the power of God, as engaged for our complete redemption, the apostle refers us to that illustrious exemplification of it which we have in the resurrection of Christ: "According to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought, or manifested in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." The divine energy that begets us to a lively hope through grace, is the same that raised the Redeemer from the prison of the grave, and fixed the authentic seal of truth on the gospel of our salvation, by declaring its author to be the Son of God with power. And, as an encouragement to come boldly to the throne of grace, we are

farther informed that our risen Saviour occupies the highest place in heaven. He sits as a Prince and a Saviour at the right hand of God the Father, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Principalities and powers designate sometimes good angels, sometimes evil spirits, and sometimes human governments; and, as the apostle here speaks of those that are not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, he, by fair construction, includes them all, and intimates that there are different ranks and orders of beings in both worlds, but that Christ is elevated above them all, by whatever names or titles they may be distinguished. And to finish the description of our Lord's exaltation, we are assured that all creatures and events are under his controlling influence, and that he reigns in heaven, head over all things, for the protection, enlargement, and comfort of his Church: even that Church which is his body, and which, as such, is ever dear and precious to him, and, being made complete in him, is to be regarded as the fulness of him who filleth all the members of his body with all spiritual comforts and gracious qualities. And he delights in this Church as his chosen dwelling, even as a holy temple which he has built and consecrated to himself, and for the praise and glory of his rich grace and matchless love.

Our blessed Redeemer, considered in his divine nature, is incapable of being exalted; for, in that respect, he is, as himself declares, "One with the Father;" and, according to Paul, he is "over all, God blessed for ever." But in his mediatorial capacity, as God with us, he may be said to have been raised from the dead, and to have been exalted to the right hand of the majesty in heaven. And it ought to be carefully noted, that all those



expressions in Scripture which indicate his dependence on, or subjection to the will of God the Father, relate to his human nature, which he assumed, or took into union with his underived and eternal Godhead, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law, by bearing our sins in his own body on the cross. As God, he had what no mere creature ever had, or ever will have, power to lay down his life, and power to resume it at pleasure. Destroy this temple, says he, meaning his body, and in three days I will raise it up again. Without this distinction, it is plainly impossible to interpret the language of Scripture so as to make it consistent with itself. Nor let this be regarded as a needless distinction. It results necessarily and irresistibly from the true and proper divinity of Christ, without which he cannot be either the Saviour or the Judge of the world. But he is both Saviour and Judge: "Blessed are they who put their trust in him!"

From the cursory view now taken of this passage of Scripture, we deduce the following particulars, viz.

1. That faith in Jesus Christ, and love to his people, are distinguishing traits of Christian character. Let us cherish these divine principles. The stronger our confidence in him who died for us, and the more fervent our affection for his people, the more happy we shall be in his service, and the more rapidly shall we advance in the way to glory, honour, and eternal life.

2. That we should pray for all that love our Saviour, that the eyes of their understanding may be enlightened to discern and appreciate the riches of their heavenly inheritance, and the glorious grace of their high and holy vocation.

3. And that we should regard our blessed Redeemer, in his state of exaltation, as head over all

principality and power, for his body, the Church, which he protects, enlarges, and beautifies, from his own infinite fulness, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, to the praise and glory of God the Father.

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## LECTURE VII.

### HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

EPHESIANS, II. 1—7.—And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom, also, we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind; and were, by nature, the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that, in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.

THERE are two things taught in this passage of Scripture, which deserve our most serious attention, viz. the depravity of our nature, and the mercy of God in providing for our salvation. These two ideas form the prominent and distinguishing features of evangelical truth. The sacred writers dwell on these topics most frequently and fervently. Indeed the grand aim of the gospel is to convince mankind of their lost and miserable condition by nature, in order that they may feel the necessity of accepting the overtures of divine mercy through the mediation of Christ. And it is of no small importance that we view our danger in connexion with the remedy which the sure word of God proposes to our acceptance. The abstract consideration of the former

would drive us to despair; and the contemplation of the latter, without due reference to the former, would make on our minds but a slight and ineffective impression. The doctrine of salvation by grace, through the atonement of Christ, proceeds on the supposition that we are guilty; and, not only guilty, but helpless, utterly unable to effect our own deliverance. All that the Saviour has done, and all that he proposes to do for us, is designed to relieve us from misery in a way that comports with the majesty of divine truth and justice. But till this misery is felt and acknowledged, the remedy, instead of being cordially accepted, will be set at nought. Let a physician proffer healing medicines to a man who does not feel himself diseased, and the offer will be neglected and despised. Propose charitable aid to one who considers himself rich and increasing in goods, and it will be regarded as an insult. It is precisely thus in the case before us. The language of the gospel is, "To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." Here is pardon, peace, righteousness, sanctification, and glory. Here is a Saviour approved of God, and suited to your wants. He has shed his blood for the remission of sins. He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes; put your trust in him, and he will save you from impending ruin. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. Believe in him; commit yourselves to him, and he will guide you through this life of sorrow; he will stand by you and support your souls in death, and at last receive you to heaven, where he ever liveth to make intercession for you. But, to the unconvinced and impenitent sinner, all this must be quite unimportant and uninteresting. He has no sense of the evil of sin, and therefore feels no need of pardoning mercy; his self-sufficiency des-

pises the proffered grace; his hopes are built on his own comparative goodness, and on some vague notions of the divine benevolence. Hence, Christ, and the sacrifice of the cross, appear to him as a root out of dry ground, without form, or fitness, or beauty, to render them desirable. Whereas, to the contrite heart that trembles at God's law, and mourns for its own sinfulness, these are good tidings of great joy. Grace is a charming sound to those who feel their need of it. To those who wish to be saved from their sins, the name of Jesus is precious. In a word, without a thorough conviction that we are guilty, and, in ourselves, wholly undone, the gospel scheme of redemption can neither be approved nor understood by us. Why, indeed, should the Scriptures speak of saving men if they were not lost, or of pardoning them if they were not guilty, or of redeeming them if they were not sold under sin? The uniform tenor of God's word supposes our depravity to be extreme, our ruin complete; and it is perfectly plain that the first step towards the hope set before us in the gospel, is a deep sense of this awful truth: "O, Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!"

I. Let us then, give our candid and sober attention to the sad picture of human corruption, as it is delineated by the apostle in the first three verses of our text. The subject is presented in various forms, with a view it would seem, to produce the stronger conviction. "Dead in trespasses and sins; walking according to the course of this world; according to the prince of the power of the air; fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and the desires of the mind; by nature, children of wrath, even as others."

The Ephesians, previous to their admission to the Church of Christ, were not dead, in the common acceptation of the term. This, it is evident, cannot

be the apostle's meaning. In what respects then, were they dead? We answer—They were dead, *legally* and *spiritually*.

First, they were dead legally, or in point of law. The law of the Lord is perfect, and it requires perfect obedience. Its penalty is death. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This declaration was made to the common parent and representative of our race. He did eat of the forbidden fruit, and, in consequence of this first transgression, all his descendants, as they were represented in him, became subject to the penalty of the law. This doctrine is plainly and unequivocally taught by the Saviour himself. You read it in the 3d chapter and 18th verse of the Gospel by John. "He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Secondly, these Ephesians were dead spiritually. Dead to all communion with God, which is the life and happiness of the soul; dead to the perception of the beauties of holiness; dead to the triumphs of faith, and the comforts of hope; dead to the pleasures of devotion; sunk in ignorance; alienated from God, the source of happiness; vain in their imaginations; devoted to idols; the sport of evil passions; carnal, selfish, revengeful, without God, and without hope in the life to come—"Dead in trespasses and sins." Such is that state of death in which divine grace found the Ephesians. They were guilty, and lay hopeless under the condemning sentence of the law. They were sinners, and by their love of sin, they were unqualified for, and completely excluded from all communion with God, the fountain of spiritual life and blessedness.

The apostle, next, notices the manner in which this depravity manifested itself:—"Wherein, in

time past, ye walked according to the course of this world." "A man's walk" is an expression, which is often used to designate his general practice or conduct. And, by the course of this world, is meant the prevailing manners and habits of that portion of mankind who are not influenced by the fear of God, or the principles of true religion. The world lieth in wickedness. And to walk according to the course of this world, is to follow the current of fashion; to comply with the customs of the wicked, and yield to the natural inclinations of our own hearts, without due regard to the law, the authority, or glory of God. "According to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:"—That is, according to the instigation and will of the devil, that malignant spirit, who commands the legions of fallen angels, which, by divine permission, range through the air, and fly from place to place, in the prosecution of their malicious purpose of corrupting and ruining mankind. The Jews believed that the air is inhabited by evil spirits, which act under a head or leader, who is called their prince. And this idea is favoured by the writers of the New Testament. That there is such a being as the devil, can hardly be doubted by any who believe the Scriptures. Christ himself, as Matthew the Evangelist informs us, experienced his temptations immediately after his baptism, and previous to his entrance on his public ministry. Hence it is said, he, i. e. Christ, knows how to succour them that are tempted, because he himself hath suffered, being tempted. "Satan hath desired to have thee, says our Lord to Peter, that he may sift thee as wheat." Luke, xxii. 31. "Be sober, be vigilant," says this same Peter in one of his Epistles, "because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter, v. 8.

As the word *power*, is here evidently put for those who exercise power, it might be rendered in the plural number, and the sense would be obvious; the prince of the powers of the air: that is, the leader of those apostate spirits which inhabit the air, and go to and fro through this guilty world to practise their wiles and execute their mischievous designs on the fallen race of Adam. “The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:”—“Children of disobedience” means disobedient children; intelligent creatures who abuse the goodness and violate the commands of their Creator.

Such is the gloomy picture of men in their natural and unregenerate state. And we are not to conclude that this description is applicable to idolaters and heathen only, such as some of the Ephesians were before they embraced the Christian faith. For, in the next verse, the apostle includes all, both Jews and Gentiles, as under the same condemnation, and in the same degraded, miserable, and helpless state. “Among whom, also, we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were, by nature, the children of wrath, *even as others.*”—When we look at this declaration of Paul, can we for a moment hesitate to acknowledge the entire and universal corruption of human nature, and the consequent necessity of renewing grace? He was a Jew, and a Jew of distinction, educated at the feet of Gamaliel, of the strict sect of the Pharisees; and so punctilious was he in outward observances, that, touching the righteousness which is of the law, he was accounted blameless. And yet we find him here placing himself on a level, in point of justification before God, with the worst of mankind—idolaters and children of wrath. Who, then, will presume to plead com-

parative innocence? Who will venture into the presence of a holy God, and claim acceptance on the ground of his own merits? All are become guilty before God. We are conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity. And as soon as we become capable of moral action we follow the lusts of the flesh, and the depraved desires of the mind. And this is the case with all who are not renewed in the spirit of their minds. True, all persons are not alike wicked and abandoned in practice. But to what is this owing? Not to any native difference of character, but to the influence of religious principle either on individuals or on the general tone of public manners. Every man has in his heart the seeds of every crime that ever was perpetrated on earth. And that every man is not a murderer, is attributable to the agency of the Holy Ghost, either in his sanctifying or restraining influence. To the question, who, or what maketh thee to differ, all good men are ready to reply as with one voice, "Grace, rich grace!" "Fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind:"—By the desires of the flesh, I understand the sensual appetites; and by those of the mind, the superior qualities of the soul seem to be intended. And the expression indicates that the poison of sin pervades the whole man. It darkens the understanding, corrupts the affections, blunts the conscience, and often perverts the noblest intellectual powers to the basest and most unworthy ends. "And were, by nature, children of wrath, even as others:"—Thus the apostle concludes his humiliating description of fallen man. The phrase, "by nature," points plainly and unquestionably to every child of Adam, as born of the flesh, and previous to his being born of God, by the renovation of his heart. "Children of wrath" is a Hebraism, and imports that we are, for



our sin, proper objects of the divine displeasure, and liable to everlasting misery. Let us admit this truth in its full extent; and let us admire,

II. The mercy and grace of God in the gift of a Saviour every way suited to our necessitous and wretched circumstances. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved.\*)" The provision which God has made for our salvation is the fruit of pure and disinterested love. We merited nothing but indignation and wrath, and tribulation and anguish. We had made ourselves vile; we had associated ourselves with the angels that kept not their first estate. We could offer no apology for our rebellion; nothing, except our misery, could be pleaded on our behalf; nor did the infinite Creator need our services; he might have permitted us to sink down in despair under the fearful weight of our guilt; he might have peopled this earth with another order of beings, without injustice, and without impairing in any measure his declarative glory: "But he *so loved* the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Well may our salvation, in its principle, its means, and its completion, be ascribed to "his great love, his self-moving, his unparalleled love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins."

"Hath quickened us together with Christ." This expression plainly indicates our recovery from that spiritual death and condemnation mentioned in the first verse of the text. But how are we quickened together with Christ? By faith in his atonement and righteousness. "In him it hath pleased the Father, that all fullness should dwell." "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his

Son." When, therefore, we feel our need of divine mercy, and credit the divine testimony, we lay hold, by faith, on the hope set before us in the gospel; and thus become interested in the vital power and saving grace of the Redeemer. Christ is to us the source of quickening influence; and faith is the medium through which that influence is conveyed to our souls. From the moment of our union to him, by this divine and indissoluble bond, we begin to discern and relish the beauty of holiness; to enjoy communion with the Father of our spirits; to emerge from darkness to light; from the bondage of sin to the liberty of God's children, and, attracted by the powers of the world to come, we aspire after glory, honour, and immortality. In view, as it would seem, of these and the like inestimable privileges of the believer, the apostle cannot forbear reminding the Ephesian Christians of what should never be forgotten, "By grace ye are saved." But as this idea is more fully exhibited in the eighth verse, and will demand our notice in a subsequent lecture, we will pass it for the present.

"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." So intimate is the union between Christ and his people that they share in all his honours. As he was raised from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of the Father Almighty in heaven, so they are elevated from the death and degradation of sin, assured of a glorious resurrection of the body, are accepted in him; and, in him, as their common head, are virtually made to sit together with him in heavenly places; i. e. in the peaceful and happy regions of glory. "For," says the pious and excellent Doddridge, "by means of that relation between him and us which divine grace hath established, we may look upon his resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God as the certain pledge and

security of ours; and regarding him in the character of a public person, who is thus raised and exalted in our name, we may be said to share in those felicities and dignities which are conferred on him."

"That in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." This is the grand end and design of redemption by the blood of Christ. To show the exceeding riches of God's grace in rescuing sinners from spiritual death and eternal ruin. Are we alive unto God? Are we delivered from the power of sin, and freed from the condemnation of the law? Have we communion with our Maker, fellowship with Christ, and hope of heaven? These and all kindred blessings are fruits of the exceeding riches of divine grace. Yea, and in the ages to come, even the ages of eternity, when the present mixed and mournful scene shall give place to the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, grace, exceeding rich and free grace will be the burden of our ceaseless song of praise to him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. To him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever: Amen!



## LECTURE VIII.

### SALVATION BY GRACE.

EPHESIANS, II. 8—10. For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, &c.

IT is of much importance for us to have correct views of the nature of gospel salvation. That we are to be saved, if saved at all, by the sovereign mercy of God, on account of the merits and atonement of Jesus Christ, is a scriptural truth, of which we should be fully convinced and deeply sensible.

This, I conceive to be the doctrine contained in this passage of Scripture. The subject divides itself into three parts, closely connected indeed, but which may, nevertheless, be viewed distinctly. First, "By grace are ye saved;" here is the source of our salvation. Secondly, "Through faith;" here is the medium by which salvation is received. Thirdly, "And that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;" here is the author of saving faith. Let me have your attention to the illustration of these three particulars.

I. "By grace are ye saved." In order to be fully convinced of the truth of this declaration, it is only necessary to consider, seriously, our condition as transgressors of the divine law. Had man continued in his primitive state of innocence, there would have been no need of the interposition of a mediator. He would have enjoyed his Maker's smiles in this world, and would have received a crown of life in the world to come, as the reward of his own righteousness. But it is a melancholy fact, fully established by Scripture and observation, that he violated the command of God, and thereby became liable to its penalty. And, having become a transgressor, if the penalty of the law be not inflicted upon him, it must be owing to the sovereign and unmerited mercy of the adorable Law-giver. That God is under no obligation to save the transgressors of his law, is a truth which cannot be questioned with the least colour of reason. To what then shall we ascribe the mission of his Son into the world to seek and to save that which was lost? To what but the overflowing riches of his grace and goodness? God, happy in himself and in the praises and homage of myriads of angelic spirits, had no need of us or any of our services to enhance his glory, or to furnish his kingdom with subjects. Long before we, or any of our race, had a place in

existence, thousands of thousands stood before him, and ten thousand times ten thousand ministered unto him. But with infinite compassion he looked down from his high and holy place upon the guilty children of men, degraded, and ruined by sin, and led captive by Satan at his will. Grace devised the plan of our redemption, and grace is still carrying forward and bringing towards a happy completion the wonderful designs of sovereign mercy. Grace induced the Eternal Father to deliver up his well-beloved Son as a victim to justice, and as a ransom for sinners. Grace prompted the Divine Saviour to assume our nature, to be born in a manger, to live a suffering life, and die an ignominious death. It is by grace that we are chosen in Christ through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. It is grace that calls us from death unto life. It is grace that subdues the will, renews the heart, purifies the affections, produces good works, and prepares the soul for the exalted employments and holy enjoyments of the heavenly world. And when the Captain of our salvation shall have fully discharged the functions of his mediatorial office; when he shall have introduced his ransomed people into everlasting glory, he will, to use the language of the prophet, bring forth the head-stone of that beautiful building, the Church, "with shoutings, crying, grace, grace unto it!"

"By grace are ye saved." This proposition is fully established by the uniform testimony of sacred writ. The principal doctrines taught by Christ and his apostles, and which are calculated to lay man low in the dust before his Maker, are those of human depravity, and salvation by free and sovereign grace through our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Saviour informs us that he came to seek and to save that which was lost. And the general tenor of his preaching taught mankind, not only that he came

to save lost sinners, but that no one under any other character than that of a lost and guilty sinner can welcome the blessings of his salvation. "I came," says he, "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "The whole, need not a physician, but they that are sick." To the same purpose the apostle of the Gentiles in this epistle declares, "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein, in time past, ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Nor did he speak thus of Gentiles, or of profligates only; but, though himself a Jew and educated a Pharisee, he added, "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature children of wrath, even as others." From the doctrine of deep and universal depravity he very naturally and joyfully passes to that of God's rich and sovereign mercy. "But God," says he, "who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." In various parts of his other epistles we find such declarations as these: "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.—Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.—Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who, of God, is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

To the testimony of Scripture we may add that of Christian experience. Every one who has a

proper acquaintance with himself, knows that by nature his heart is so hard, his will so obstinate, and his obedience so imperfect, that if he is ever to be saved, it must be by grace. Yes, believer, I can appeal to you on this subject, in full confidence that your own experience has convinced you of the truth of the apostle's declaration, "By grace ye are saved." You know, that had not God arrested you in your thoughtless and sinful career, by the awakening influences of the blessed Spirit, you would still have been walking in the broad way to destruction. And, even after you became deeply concerned for the salvation of your soul, did you not find, upon trial, that all your prayers, all your religious performances, all your efforts to reform your heart were totally inefficacious without the renovating influence of divine grace? And although you have now embraced the Saviour, and are resting on him alone for salvation, still you are sensible of your entire dependence on God, to subdue the corrupt and wayward propensities of your heart, to confirm your pious purposes, and complete the work of sanctification which grace has begun in your soul. You have no confidence in the flesh. You dare not trust your own heart; for you have found it to be, what the Scriptures affirm of it, "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." It is always ready to yield to the slightest temptation, and often betrays you into sin. Hence you are frequently harassed with doubts, and enveloped in darkness; so that your only hope is, that He who has begun a good work in you will not abandon it till the day of Jesus Christ. In short, if you have laid hold of the hope set before you in the gospel, you have renounced all your own doings and your own righteousness as filthy rags. You acknowledge the imperfection of your best services. You are careful to maintain good works, not as a ground of jus-

tification before God, but as the certain fruits of an evangelical faith, and you take pleasure in viewing yourself a grateful debtor to unmerited mercy and sovereign grace.

Indeed, it is folly, it is heresy of the most dangerous kind, to maintain that we can merit the favour of our Maker, after having in so many instances abused his goodness and violated his commands. What are the best of our good works? a few pious meditations, a few prayers, a few alms-deeds! What proportion do these bear to that "eternal weight of glory which is to be conferred upon us and revealed in us?" What! can works that are not performed by our own power; works that proceed from grace; works which owe their design and execution to God, who worketh in us both to will and do his good pleasure, can these merit for us the unutterable and interminable joys of heaven? Does not every spiritual gift, every good quality in us come from God? If we love him is it not because he first loved us? If we credit his word, and in any degree keep his commands, is it not because he has enlightened our minds in the knowledge of the truth, and subdued our wills to the obedience of faith? The whole scheme of our redemption by Jesus Christ is calculated to humble the pride of man, to magnify the divine law, to exalt the name, and display the grace of the Father of mercies. And the hope of being justified, either in whole or in part, by our own works, is fallacious and unscriptural. It is without money and without price that we are to receive the water of life. The sacrifice and righteousness of the Son of God form the only sure ground of a sinner's trust. This sacrifice and righteousness are to be received,

II. "Through faith." This brings us to the second thing in our text which demands our atten-



tion. Faith is the medium by which the blessings of a free and gracious salvation are to be received. To have faith, or to believe, is an expression so vague in itself, and taken in so many different senses in Scripture, that we cannot take too much pains to ascertain its precise meaning, as an essential feature of the Christian character. Faith is sometimes a disposition common to the righteous and the wicked; and even the devils are said to believe. This variety of signification is easily accounted for. Faith is an exercise of mind, whose nature is to be ascertained by its object in any given instance. When we believe a past event, we are said to have faith; for, "through faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." Heb. xi. 3. When we believe a future event, we are said to have faith, for "faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Indeed every act of the mind, acquiescing in a revealed truth, is called faith in the style of sacred writ.

But among these various kinds of faith there is *one* on which the Scriptures lay great stress, and which is essential to salvation. This is the faith mentioned in our text. It is the same that our Lord refers to, when he says, "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." In order to understand the nature of this faith, we must attend to its object. The principal object of justifying faith is Jesus Christ, as dying to satisfy divine justice and save sinners. On this account Paul says to the Corinthians, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." True faith contemplates with peculiar joy and reverence the glorious objects displayed on the cross of Christ, and receives as precious and infallible truth, what the Scripture affirms, that "There is none other name

under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." It inspires the believer with a sincere and ardent desire to "be found in him, to be accepted in him, to be conformed to him, and produces a willingness to honour him, and to be eternally indebted to him for all the blessings of salvation." This account of the nature of faith is perhaps still too general. We are not saved by merely wishing to be saved; there must also be a readiness to comply with the terms of salvation. There are two kinds of desires to partake of the benefits of Christ's death. There is a vague wish to be interested in the sacrifice of the cross unconnected with any of those acts or dispositions which God has been pleased to require of us. Such a desire will be unavailing. There is another kind of desire to share in the benefits of the Redeemer's purchase, a desire which animates us with a determination to obtain these benefits, whatever sacrifices we may be obliged to make in order to possess them. 'This I conceive to be an essential property of saving faith. The believer receives the word of God as the infallible oracles of truth. He consults these sacred oracles with a view to know what God requires of him; and here he finds three requirements. Jesus Christ is proposed to his understanding, to his heart, and to his conduct. Faith receives Jesus Christ in these three respects. The understanding, the heart, and the conduct are all regulated by the Spirit and the laws of Jesus Christ. Faith enables the believer to admit the most incomprehensible doctrines, the most profound mysteries, if Jesus Christ reveal them. Faith will make us seek and desire that kind of happiness which is most opposed to the desires of flesh and blood, if Jesus Christ promise it. Faith will inspire us with resolution to perform the most difficult, the most self-denying duties, if Jesus Christ enjoin such duties

upon us. This I conceive to be the only scriptural notion of evangelical, justifying faith; for that faith by which the soul receives the benefits of the atonement, is not a dormant, inactive principle. Saving faith is a living faith; but "faith without works is dead." True faith inclines the believer to observe the commands of Christ, as well as to rely on his grace. True faith unites the soul to Jesus as the branch is united to the vine. In virtue of this union the believer derives from Christ, in whom dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily, all needful strength, nourishment, and consolation. By faith we rely on the atonement of Christ for the pardon of our sins. By faith we accept of his righteousness as the sole ground of our justification. Faith, if I may so speak, is the channel of communication between Christ and the believing soul. It is through this medium that the believer commits his dearest interests to Christ, and receives from him in return hourly grace, and strength, and comfort. By faith we walk, by faith we live, by faith we fight, and by faith we conquer every sin.

Allow me now, reader, to ask you whether you have faith. Have you that kind of faith of which we have been speaking? That faith which goes directly to Jesus Christ, which receives his word as the man of your counsel, his blood as the price of your redemption, his righteousness as the ground of your hope, and his law as the rule of your conduct! Have you that faith which works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world? If you have faith, whence did it originate? Is it of a heavenly extraction, or is it merely an effort of your own mind? The apostle informs you that the faith through which you are saved is

III. "Not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." This is the third thing in our text which claims our notice. And, unquestionably, if every good and

perfect gift be from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, God is the giver of saving faith, as well as of every other Christian grace. If human depravity pervade the understanding, the will, the heart, and the affections, we are morally incapable of believing in Jesus to the saving of the soul, without the agency of the Divine Spirit. "No man," says the Saviour, "can come unto me except the Father draw him." And the language of our text is decisive and emphatic, "It is not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." If faith be a grace of the renewed heart, it is evident we are as much dependent on God for faith as we are for the renovation of our hearts. The stream cannot rise above the fountain; neither can any act of the carnal mind be spiritual; and if it be not spiritual it cannot be acceptable to God; for he is a Spirit, and they that would serve him acceptably must serve him in spirit and in truth. However ungrateful this doctrine may be to the haughty, high-minded, impenitent sinner, I am confident that every real Christian will subscribe to it with all his heart. You who now exercise true faith in Christ are not strangers to the prayer, "Lord, help me to believe!" God has been attentive to your supplication, he has enabled you to receive Jesus Christ, and you are disposed to refer the whole of your salvation to free grace. You are conscious that the faith by which you have received Christ, as well as every other benefit which is brought home and applied by it, is not the product of any natural principle in yourselves; but it is all the free gift of God, who, of his own good will and rich mercy, graciously wrought it in you by the power of his Spirit. Ye have believed through grace; and it has been given to you in the behalf, or for the sake of Christ, to believe and rest on him alone for whole salvation.

Let not the careless and inconsiderate pervert this

wholesome doctrine of our dependence into a pretext for their inattention to the things of religion. Let them rather humble themselves before the God of mercy, and implore help from him who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not. Let them, under a sense of their lost and helpless condition, go to the throne of his grace who has promised the Holy Spirit to them that ask, and wait for his sacred influence. Let them remember that we are as dependent on God for the fruits of the earth, as we are for the fruits of righteousness. In both cases we are to use the appointed means of obtaining them, and then look to our Maker for his blessing.

The doctrine of salvation by grace is interwoven in the whole system of revealed truth. And though the self-righteous and self-deceiving sinner may laugh at it, the true believer will never abuse it. He blushes at the remembrance of his best performed duties, bows at the foot of the cross, and casts himself on the arms of sovereign mercy; and yet, at the same time, he "works out his own salvation with fear and trembling." These are the two dispositions which we wish to excite in your minds. The subject on which we have been meditating is calculated to produce, at once, humility and vigilance. Faith, considered merely as a mental act, is our own; no one can believe for us, or in our stead. But faith, considered as the reliance of the soul on Christ, and the merit of his righteousness and atoning blood, is God's gift, inasmuch as it is the result of his gracious influence on the heart and conscience. It is therefore clearly our duty and interest to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure; working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do his good pleasure. It seems vastly important and necessary that we should know and acknowledge the truth on this

subject. We have ruined ourselves by sin. Where is our help? What is our remedy? Can we regenerate our fallen nature? It is physically and morally impossible. No creature possesses self-creating or self-renovating power. It is just as much the prerogative of God to create us anew, in Christ Jesus, as to form our bodies and breathe into those bodies the breath of life. What then, you will ask, are we to do? or have we any thing to do? Yes; much, in various ways; but nothing, in a way of merit. You have to confess your guilt, acknowledge your dependence, and cry for mercy. Grace, free grace, is your only resource. All your life-springs are in God—the Saviour. Your dependence is complete, in reference to the concerns of both worlds. There is a hope set before you. Lay hold of it. There is an open fountain for moral cleansing. Wash, and be clean; ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. Lord, save, or I perish. Amen and Amen.



## LECTURE IX.

EPHESIANS, II. 11—13.—Wherefore, remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

IN the first two verses of this passage, the apostle addresses himself to the Gentile part of the Ephesian church. His design is, to produce in their minds a high and grateful sense of their privileges and blessings as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

To this end, he calls upon them to reflect upon their former condition, pointing out the degradation and misery of that condition—"Uncircumcised, without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." In the four following verses he applies himself to both Jews and Gentiles; and the sacrifice of the Redeemer's blood is pointed out as the procuring cause of their reconciliation to one another, and to God. A brief illustration of these ideas, with some practical remarks, is all that we propose in this discourse.

Previous to the Saviour's advent, the Jews were the peculiar people of God. With them were the oracles of divine truth, and by them the worship of Jehovah was celebrated according to a prescribed form. The rite of circumcision was the token or sign of visible church-membership. Hence the phrase, "the circumcision," came to be used, in process of time, to denote the whole Jewish nation; and they, in turn, and in a way of reproach, called all other nations and individuals uncircumcised persons, or, collectively, and more emphatically, "*the uncircumcision.*" Circumcision, like baptism, under the Christian dispensation, was a positive institution, deriving its importance from the divine appointment, and dependent for its efficacy on the divine blessing. Many persons, doubtless, received the sign, who nevertheless remained strangers to the thing signified. For, that this ordinance was intended to intimate the necessity of holiness we are explicitly taught in the Epistle to the Romans, 2d chapter, 29th verse: "Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." And the neglect of this ordinance, as being indicative of a disregard for the covenant of which it was the seal, is

noticed by the apostle, among other particulars, which constitute the guilt and wretchedness of heathenism. But the next privation mentioned is of still more awful import—"Without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise." Immediately on the fall of our first parents, the Saviour was announced as "the seed of the woman that should bruise the serpent's head." But the knowledge of this consoling promise was soon lost amidst abounding wickedness, except among the remnant of people who adhered to the worship of the true God. The Mosaic ritual was a shadow of good things to come, and its ordinances were means of grace, in the religious use of which many believed in the promised Messiah, and were saved. By the calling of Abraham, the giving of the law, and the mission of prophets, the hope of a Redeemer was kept up in the midst of surrounding ignorance and idolatry. With the nation whom God was pleased, in mercy to a sinful world, to select as the depository of his truth, he condescended to ratify sundry covenants, all pointing directly or indirectly to the same illustrious end; as the Sinai-covenant, with the people in general; the Abrahamic covenant, as relating specially to the blessings of salvation; the covenant respecting the priesthood in Aaron's family; and that of the kingdom of David and his house, to be fully realized in the reign of the Son of David, the Prince of Peace. But of these covenants and their blessings, the Gentiles were ignorant. They were without Christ; they had no just views of his character, office, or work. They had not the oracles of the living God to direct their faith, and furnish rules of conduct. They had no system of ordinances, or religious instruction which was calculated to inspire the hope of pardon through the blood, and accept-



ance in the righteousness of a Redeemer. "Having no hope:"—That is, no well-grounded hope of everlasting life. The wisest men in the pagan world have never been able to come to any satisfactory result in their speculations respecting the immortality of the soul and future happiness. Darkness, thick darkness, must for ever have rested on these profound and interesting subjects, had not God been pleased to bring life and immortality to light by the gospel. How happy are we then if we reject not the counsel of God, and prove ourselves his enemies by wicked works. The day-spring from on high has visited us. We are assured, in the most positive and unequivocal terms, that man is born for eternity. "We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." We know where to look for pardon and acceptance. To us the path of duty is made plain. The word of God is the ground, and the Son of God the object of our hope. But farther, the apostle calls upon these Ephesian converts to remember, that "they were without God in the world;" that is, practical atheists. They were not professed atheists. They had gods many, and lords many. But they were idolaters. They paid homage to creatures instead of the Creator; to images of various materials; to the spirits of departed heroes, commonly very bad men; and even to the devil himself: for, says our apostle to the Galatians, "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God; and I would not, brethren, that ye should have fellowship with devils." Gal. iv. 8. The review of these wretched circumstances could hardly fail to excite gratitude in those whom divine grace had brought into a better condition. When these Ephesian Christians recalled to mind their former ignorance

and folly, they would feel their obligations to that God who, rich in mercy, had called them from darkness to light, and blessed them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. To produce this effect, appears to have been Paul's design in recounting their miseries and their sins, while in a state of alienation from God and his Church.

And may we not turn this part of our subject to some good and practical account? Does it not suggest to us a powerful motive to exert ourselves, whenever an opportunity offers to send the gospel of salvation to the heathen that sit in darkness and beneath the shadow of death? Pagans are much the same now as in the apostolic times. They serve gods of their own making, and follow the vain imaginations of their own hearts. Ignorant of the Saviour, devoted to idols, and given to vice in its most hideous and degrading forms, they are aliens from the commonwealth of Christendom, strangers to the covenant of mercy, without God in the world. This being the fact, every institution which aims to make known the unsearchable riches of Christ to dying men, has high and commanding claims upon the patronage of Christians.

Another remark seems to arise naturally out of what has been said. To whom much is given of him shall much be required. The lines are fallen to us in pleasant places. We have a goodly heritage. We know our Lord's will. The gospel comes to us with messages of mercy and grace. It proffers us a great salvation. How shall we escape if we neglect it? Placed as we are under the meridian light of the Sun of righteousness, we cannot, with impunity, be careless on the subject of religion. We cannot plead invincible ignorance. We have line upon line, and precept upon precept. A glorious hope is set before us; and if we refuse to lay

hold of this hope, we shall inevitably die in our sins. Gospel despisers must be, of all sinners, the most inexcusable. They have no cloak for their sin. If there be one place in the regions of despair more intolerable than another, that place without doubt will be assigned to them, and thither they will descend under the double curse of an insulted God and a rejected Saviour. The idea is awful, but we have Scripture for it: "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not; woe unto thee, Chorasin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." Matt. xi. 19. It will not suffice us, readers, to have been born and educated in a Christian country. The gospel is given us for practical and holy purposes. By the ministry of its doctrines and ordinances, God is training up a people for his praise. All the workers of iniquity, even though they may have been descended of pious parents, though they may have been baptized in the name of the adorable Trinity; nay, though they may have sat at the Lord's table, and partaken of the symbols of his body and blood, yet, so long as they exhibit none of the fruits of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, are to be regarded as living without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world. O, let fear-

fulness and trembling seize upon the sinners in Zion! "That servant who knew his Lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." Luke, xii. 47.

And ye redeemed of the Lord, whom divine grace has plucked as brands from the burning, look back; remember what you once were, and consider well the means by which you have been brought into a better state. "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." "But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." This is true, not only of the Ephesians, to whom these words were immediately addressed, but of all who cherish a good hope, through grace, of eternal life. The sacrifice of the Redeemer's blood, is the glorious and consoling peculiarity of the Christian religion. It is in the cross of Christ that Jehovah is seen, a just God, and a merciful Saviour. Yes, Christians, you owe all your privileges, and all your hopes to the blood of Christ. It is this that brings you near to God, and restores you to a state of reconciliation with heaven. It is this that gives you access with confidence to the throne of grace. It is this that imparts peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is this that furnishes you with arguments when approaching the mercy-seat of your God: "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed:" "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, also freely give us all things?" It is this that inspires that grateful song of praise, which having learned on earth, you will sing in heaven: "Unto him that

loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever!"



## LECTURE X.

### CHURCH-FELLOWSHIP A DUTY AND PRIVILEGE.

EPHESIANS, II. 19.—“Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers, and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”

THE visible Church of Christ is a community to which it is at once our privilege and our duty to belong. It has its laws and its ordinances. These laws and ordinances are of divine appointment, and are happily calculated to promote the edification and comfort of those who observe them. And, though an outward attendance on Christian institutions does not necessarily imply rectitude of motive and purity of heart, yet, those persons who wholly and carelessly neglect these institutions while they admit their divine appointment, must be considered as manifesting, at once, irreverence for the authority and ingratitude for the mercy of Heaven. God, ordinarily, works by means; and gospel ordinances are sanctified means for the attainment of a great and important end, even the salvation of the soul. We have forsaken the Lord that made us; have rendered ourselves obnoxious to the penalty of his law; have cast off the salutary restraints of his parental government, and have made ourselves outcasts, wanderers, foreigners, and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel. We have forfeited his favour. But, like an indulgent parent who pities the follies of his children, he is reluctant to take the forfeiture at our hands. Having laid help for us on one, who is mighty to save, he opens his

arms to receive us back again to the place and privileges of children. How amazing it is, that any of our guilty race should be restored to the favour and friendship of their insulted Creator! "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." By the grace of God through the redemption that is in Christ, the rebellious are pardoned, the strangers and foreigners are admitted to the family of God, with the tenderest expressions of forgiving mercy and redeeming love. Such was the case of these Ephesian converts, whom the apostle congratulates on their happy change of circumstances. They had been foreigners, estranged from the worship of the true God, devoted to idols, and without hope in the world:—But having now been made accepted in the beloved, they were admitted to the communion of saints, and to all the honours, the privileges, and endearments of the household of God. "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Cor. vi. 11.

"Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

"Fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God:"—What an interesting idea do these expressions convey of the happiness and privileges of Christians!

I. In the first place, they are fellow-citizens with the saints. This intimates that they are to be associated with saints in the participation of religious ordinances, and for the maintenance of Christian order and discipline. The people of God are called saints, i. e. holy persons, for two reasons. First, because they are devoted to God, and solemnly bound to spend their time and talents in his service and to his glory. "The Lord hath set

apart him that is godly for himself." Secondly, because the truly pious are regenerated by the Spirit of God, and endued with a holy temper and disposition. They have a relish for holiness; they love holy exercises, and their prevailing desire and fervent prayer is to be holy in heart, life, and all manner of conversation. Whatever obloquy, therefore, may have been cast upon the term *saint*, or whatever evils may have been practised under the garb of saintship, the title, in its legitimate import, is both sacred and honourable. All true Christians are saints. And they should be very careful not to bring reproach upon the name, by acting in a manner unworthy their high vocation.

As the saints have interests to pursue, and enemies to contend with, which are common to them all, in order that they may the more easily and completely compass the end of their holy calling, they are to be united; they are to form a community of brethren, bound together by the law of love, and to be distinguished from other societies by their evangelical principles, and practice. This I take to be, substantially, what the apostle means by fellow-citizenship with the saints. He means church-communion and fellowship; which is of immense importance to the interests of Christ's kingdom, whether we consider it in relation to his followers collectively, or individually. The objects of church-fellowship are, in general, the following:—First, the exhibition and maintenance of a system of sound doctrines. This is of no small consequence; for we are required to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; and are not to be driven about by every wind of doctrine. The articles of the Christian faith are contained in the Bible. Hence the propriety of reading a portion of sacred Scripture as a part of public worship. And this is as worthy of your serious atten-

tion, as any other branch of the exercises of God's house; for though you may be familiar with the letter of the portion read, yet it may reach your heart, under a divine blessing, with a light and power altogether new. There is a richness and authority in the word of truth, which entitle it to be read and heard with care and reverence, in all our solemn assemblies. Formularies and catechisms are used by most Christian communions; not to supply the place of the Bible, but to present in a summary and connected form, the doctrines and usages drawn from the sacred oracles, which unite the faith and practice of a particular Christian denomination. Such a form of sound words we have, in our confession, catechisms and plan of church-government. Every professing Christian ought, unquestionably, to have at least a general acquaintance with the doctrines and ecclesiastical usages of the church to which he belongs.

Secondly, the celebration of public worship and gospel ordinances, is another object of church-fellowship. This cannot be done properly, without an agreement in principles and practice among those who are associated for the purpose. The stated ministration of the word requires the combined influence and punctual attendance of a competent number of worshippers. As our children are to be taught the principles of religion, it is necessary that we be agreed in the question, What are the principles of true religion? Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, are to be administered to the proper subjects. That all things may be done decently and in order, therefore, we must be substantially of one mind respecting the proper subjects of these ordinances, as well as the mode of administering them. It is true that a diversity of opinion on some points both of doctrine and practice obtains among those who, we hope, are the sincere friends of Christ;



but this fact proves nothing against the communion of saints, or the fellowship of a particular church. It only shows the propriety of what God, in his wisdom, has permitted, i. e. that Christendom be divided into different sects, till the auspicious day arrive, when the watchmen shall see eye to eye, when all minor distinctions shall be absorbed in the generous principle of love to God and charity to men; when the pious of every clime, and of every tongue, shall embrace, with ardent affection, all who fear God, work righteousness, and love our Lord Jesus in sincerity;—"when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it." Isa. ii. 2.

Thirdly, another object of church-fellowship is the exercise of discipline. No truth is more plain, or more fully established by experience, than that discipline of some kind is essential to the well-being, if not to the existence of any community. In establishing and organizing a church on the earth, Christ and his apostles have acted upon this principle. The discipline of God's house is altogether of the moral kind, so far as his people have any thing to do with its exercise. It is to be maintained, not only with firmness, but with meekness and prayer for the reformation of the offender. Its utmost stretch is excommunication, i. e. an exclusion from church privileges; and this is to be continued no longer than till the subject gives scriptural evidence of repentance. This awful act of church discipline was called, in the apostolic age, "a delivering over of the person to Satan; according to the idea that all who do not serve the Lord Christ, are the servants of the devil. That the disorderly and heretical are to be excluded from the communion of saints is undeniable. Two or three passages of Scripture will make this abundantly plain.

A member of the Corinthian church had been guilty of incest. It is in his case that Paul gives the church this solemn charge: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. v. 4, 5. And among his excellent instructions to Titus, who as an evangelist had for a time the superintendence of the church in Crete, we find the following, (chap. iii. 10:) "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself." And in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, we find a piece of advice which evidently implies the existence of church-fellowship among those to whom it is addressed, and also intimates its utility: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted: bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

From the cursory view which we have taken of the subject, is it not plain that Christian fellowship is both a duty and a privilege? If any thing more were necessary, I might add that there are many precious promises which are applicable to those, and those only, who attend upon all the ordinances of God's house, and hold communion with his people. I will recite one or two for your serious consideration. In the 92d Psalm, 13th verse, you will find it thus written: "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God: they shall still bring forth fruit in old age." And in the 132d, 13—16: "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation: this is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for

I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy." This is but a specimen of the many promises which are made to the pious, as united and associated for the honour of God's holy name. Is it not a duty and a privilege then to belong to that communion to which God acknowledges a covenant relation? Does not every one who would live godly in Christ Jesus, need the friendly counsels, the prayers and sympathies of the pious? Frail child of the dust, will you not avail yourself of the helps which your fellow travellers would gladly afford you, and which your heavenly Father has provided for you on the way to the land of promise! Ruined sinners, who hope for pardon through the blood of the new covenant, which was shed for the remission of sins, how can you refuse to commemorate your Saviour's death! How can you, without compunction, live in the habitual neglect of the last, the dying request of the sinner's friend, "This do in remembrance of me!" Is not this ordinance of divine appointment, and of perpetual obligation? Is it not to be celebrated till He that instituted it come the second time without sin unto salvation? Is it not a consoling, strengthening, quickening ordinance? Did not the Redeemer make himself known to the disciples at Emmaus, in the breaking of bread? And have not his followers, in a thousand instances had reason to say, rising from the sacred table, "My soul is satisfied, as with marrow and fatness;—I sat down under his shadow with great delight; his banner over me was love, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." Yes, we trust there are those, not a few, who were once strangers and foreigners, but are now, through grace, fellow-citizens with the saints, that can give witness that he is precious; and that he has more

than once appeared peculiarly precious to their souls in the communion of his body and blood. Do you not all hope to mingle with the saints in heaven? Why not, then, make common cause with them on the earth? Why not join their communion, and strive together with them by your prayers, your example, your counsels, and the whole weight of your influence, for the furtherance of the gospel? Are you afraid of the cross? What is the cross which we are required to take up in comparison of the Saviour's, when he bore our sins in his own body on the tree? It is indeed an indispensable term of discipleship: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." The maxim is a correct one, "No cross, no crown." And yet it is equally true that, to those who are influenced by the law of love, "His yoke is easy, and his burden is light." O, who would not sacrifice the opinion of a world that lieth in wickedness to the approbation of him whose favour is life, and who has power to destroy both soul and body in hell? When the question is, Whom shall we serve? the world or the Saviour? who that has common sense can be at a loss to decide? What can the world do for us? what does it do for its votaries? what but flatter, and tantalise, and disappoint? And what cannot the Saviour do for us? Shall they who forsake all for his sake and the gospel's, be losers in the end? Is it a vain thing to serve him? Hear his promise, sure and steadfast as the throne of God: "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

II. "And of the household of God:"—This clause of our text is but an amplification of the former. We shall compress what we have to say

upon it into a narrow compass. God acknowledges his people as members of his family, and acts towards them the part of a father. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." And surely there can be no doubt that God is the best of fathers. If, in the spirit of adoption, you can cry, Abba-Father, all the perfections of the eternal Godhead are pledged for your safety and happiness. The young lions may hunger, but they that wait upon the Lord shall not want any good thing. Being of the household of God, what can you want? Protection? Where then is the promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee?" And are you in want of witnesses to the repeated fulfilment of this promise? Trusting in God, Daniel was happy in the lion's den; Elijah was fed by ravens; Jonah was safe in the whale's belly; Paul in shipwreck; John in the Isle of Patmos; the martyrs of Jesus in the flames; and thousands of others have found him a very present help in time of need. Can you want a friend and counsellor in times of trouble? God invites you to come boldly to the throne of grace. His eyes are continually upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cries. Do you need parental correction to keep you humble and reclaim you when you wander from the right way? Here you have it secured to you by covenant, and it is none of the least of his covenant mercies. Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, &c. Do you wish a friend and comforter from whom you will never be separated by any of the changes of time, and to whom you can look for consolation when death inexorable tears away your companions, or your children, dear objects of a parent's heart. In God you have such a friend, a friend that never dies, the everlasting Father. In every bereavement you can say and sing, "The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock; and

let the God of my salvation be exalted!" Do you wish a friend to stand by you, and lead you into the land of promise when you die? Here you have such a friend. How precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his saints! Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." What shall we say more? If you are in very deed fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God, all things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas; or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's!

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## LECTURE XI.

### CHRIST THE CHIEF CORNER STONE.

EPHESIANS, II. 20—22.—And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

THE Church of God is here compared to a building, of which the apostles and prophets are, ministerially, the foundation, and Jesus Christ the corner stone, holding the several parts together, and supporting the whole stress of the edifice. The pious of all ages and nations, are the materials of which this building is composed. These materials, fitly framed *into* or *upon* the foundation, grow, or rise into one vast, beautiful temple—sacred to the worship and glory of Jehovah—an habitation of God, through the influence and indwelling of the Divine Spirit. These are the leading ideas conveyed in the passage, and to these, in the order just

mentioned, we shall confine our remarks in the ensuing lecture.

I. "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets:"—It is not meant to be intimated in this expression, that apostles and prophets constitute, personally, any part of the foundation on which the Church rests. In this respect, Jesus Christ is the foundation, and the only foundation, as well as the chief corner stone. Thus Paul himself teaches, in his first epistle to the Corinthians: "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."—iii. 2. But, ministerially, apostles and prophets contributed to this foundation. To direct mankind to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world, and the only ground of a sinner's hope, was the grand and ultimate design of the prophetic office from the days of Moses till the burden of the Lord came to Israel by the mouth of Malachi. For the same purpose the apostles preached and wrought miracles, and suffered the loss of all things. It is called *the foundation*, in the singular number, to intimate the unity in doctrine and aim of those inspired men who have been commissioned of God, at different periods of the world, to publish the glad tidings of salvation, through a Redeemer, to a lost and guilty world. And have we not here a strong confirmation of our faith in the Christian scheme of redemption? It is no new thing. David taught it. Solomon taught it. Isaiah, with the precision of an evangelist, taught it. Nor is it, like the various systems of Pagan philosophy, a hypothesis of a day, or of any one period of the world, which, after a short turn, gives place to a successor. It was promulged to Adam, when, smitten with a sense of guilt, he fled from the presence of God in the garden of Eden. It was taught, with increasing light, by a train of types, and sacrifices, and prophecies, reaching through

many generations, and which meet and find their exact accomplishment in the person and sufferings of Christ; and which are wholly inapplicable to any other personage known in the annals of the world. It is taught by those who witnessed the advent, the life, the death, and the resurrection of Christ. By persons who attended on his instructions, who witnessed his miracles, who spent their days in the ministry of his gospel, and sealed their testimony with their blood. This testimony comes down to us corroborated by the accumulating evidence of ages, derived from the progress of this gospel, in despite of the power, the wit, and the vain philosophy which have been employed to suppress it, or invalidate its claims to a divine original, from its benign influence on society, from its matchless efficacy in overcoming the fears of death, by opening to the dying Christian the prospect of a blessed immortality; and from its simple, but significant and venerable ordinances, whose origin is utterly unaccountable on any other supposition than that Christianity is the religion of God, and Jesus Christ the only Saviour of lost men. Were the intelligent unbeliever to give due weight to this consideration, one would think it could hardly fail to stagger his incredulity? If our religion be not true, whence this cloud of witnesses in its support? Whence the coincidence of prophets and apostles? If it be not true, who will undertake to give us a sober and consistent interpretation of the types and prophecies of the Old Testament? If Jesus Christ was not a divine personage, why such an extraordinary chain of preparations for his advent? If he did not bear our sins in his own body on the tree, of whom does Isaiah speak in these remarkable words? "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted; but he was



wounded for *our* transgressions, he was bruised for *our* iniquities; the chastisement of *our* peace was upon him, and with *his* stripes *we* are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on *him* the iniquity of *us* all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Isa. liii. 4, &c. Who that is acquainted with the history of Christ, can be at a loss to find in him the exact accomplishment of this prophecy? And we may defy the whole host of unbelievers to find its accomplishment in any other. Sure and steadfast, Christian, is the ground of your hope. Your faith is not a blind and superstitious credulity. It is intelligent, rational, and, if I may use the term in a sober sense, philosophical. It rests upon evidence as clear, as various, and satisfactory as the nature of the case will admit of. It is built on the testimony of many witnesses, apostles and prophets, who lived in distant places and times.

II. "Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone:"—It has been asked, by way of objection, "how can Jesus Christ be both corner stone and foundation, when the corner stone makes but a part of the foundation?" To this it is a sufficient answer, to say, that the same thing may have different denominations in different relations. This is the fact with regard to Christ. He is expressly called the only foundation in a passage already quoted. 1 Cor. iii. 1. In other respects, as the subject rendered it suitable, he is called a temple, a door, a builder; and the prophet Isaiah calls him both a corner stone and a foundation, chap. xxviii. 16: "Thus saith the Lord God, behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a pre-

cious corner stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste." All these varied representations tend to the same point. They show that, in the great concern of man's redemption, Jesus Christ has the pre-eminence; that he is the alpha and omega, the author and the finisher of our faith; that he is every thing that the sinner needs; that we are dependent on him for pardon and righteousness, grace and glory.

As the corner stone of a building is a part of the foundation, on which much depends for the safety of the superstructure, when used as an emblem of Christ, it strikingly indicates the dignity of his person, and the importance of those relations which he sustains to the Church. Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, implies clearly his superiority, not only to apostles and prophets, but to angels, and all created beings. "Being so much better than the angels, says an apostle, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he, at any time, Thou art my Son; this day I have begotten thee? And, again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And, again, when he bringeth the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." Heb. i. 4, &c. Indeed, he who is Lord and Saviour of the Church universal, must be more than a finite creature. To say that a mere creature is competent to execute the office of Redeemer for a race of guilty fellow creatures, is to say every man is able to save himself, and therefore a Redeemer was unnecessary. But this is to impeach the wisdom and pour contempt on the mercy of God, who "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." The truth is, in our fallen and helpless state, we need a *divine Saviour*.

We need pardon, and it is not to be had without an atonement; we need a righteousness, and the law which we have transgressed requires a perfect one; we need protection, and such is the power and subtlety of our foes that no arm but that of Omnipotence can defend us; we need an advocate with the Father to manage our cause, and procure the acceptance of our imperfect services. Such a Redeemer we have in the person of Jesus Christ. He has shed his blood for the remission of sins, and its efficacy is infinite. By taking upon him the seed of Abraham, and in our nature fulfilling the demands of the law, he has wrought out a perfect righteousness, which is unto and upon all them that believe. And having all power in heaven and on earth, he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him. Having himself suffered, in that he was tempted, he knows how to succour them that are tempted, and "he ever liveth to make intercession for us." Is he not, then, emphatically, the chief corner stone? May we not securely entrust to him the keeping of our souls? Built on this immutable foundation, what have we to fear? "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." The feeblest believer may defy the power of the adversary, and sing in triumph, "When I am weak, then am I strong; for I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me!" But this corner stone, firm and immutable as it is, will not support and secure us unless we are united to it, and built upon it; as is plainly taught in the next verse.

III. "In whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." The truly pious of all nations and ages are the materials of which this building is composed; Jews and Gentiles, Old Testament as well as New Testament saints; for the efficacy of our Redeemer's

atonement reaches back to the fall of Adam, and forward to the end of time. He has broken down the wall of ritual observances which separated the tribes of Israel from other nations; and by the once offering of himself upon the cross, he has opened a way for the exercise of mercy to all the various descriptions of men that dwell on the earth. Under the Christian dispensation of the covenant of grace, "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is *all* and *in all*." But these materials, in order that they may grow, or rise into a holy temple, are fitly framed upon the chief corner stone. That is, they are united to Christ by faith, and to one another by love. As, in architecture, the edifice depends on the foundation, and all the parts are closely connected, and contribute mutually to the strength and symmetry of the whole, so it is in this building of God. To borrow the idea of Peter, Christians, as *lively* stones are built on Christ, the living corner stone, by faith. This is a principle of vast importance in the gospel plan of redemption. Without this it is impossible to please God, or participate in the blessings of the new covenant. It constitutes the medium through which the efficacy of the atonement and righteousness of the Lord Jesus is conveyed to the soul of the believer. It is the result of a divine influence upon the heart: and when once produced there, it becomes a living, active, and sanctifying principle. It is not a cold, languid, or inoperative assent of the understanding merely to the truths of God's word. It works by love, and implies submission and obedience as well as trust. It is indeed primarily a cleaving of the soul to Christ, an entire reliance on the sacrifice of his blood for pardon, and on his righteousness for justification. But if this reliance be really exercised, the fruits of faith will be apparent. The

Christian will wait on God for the communications of his grace in all the ordinances of his appointment. Feeding on the sincere milk of the word he will grow thereby. He will be useful to his family, his connections, his acquaintance, his generation. He will be "ready unto every good word and work." He will be exemplary and circumspect, bearing about with him the dying of the Lord Jesus. He will be of a meek and quiet spirit; disposed to do or suffer the will of God without repining or arraigning the conduct of Providence at the bar of his own judgment. He will have a tender concern for the interests of Zion, and be ready to favour, as opportunity offers, any design which makes for the perfection of that spiritual building in which he professes to be a living stone.

Thus united, and proving his union to Christ, the source whence he derives all his strength, and all his graces, he will be kind and affectionate to his Christian brethren. For the materials of this building are fitly framed together. That is, the disciples of Christ are to be knit together by the law of kindness. "By this," says the Saviour, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." John xiii. 35. And surely it is fit and proper that children of the same Father, subjects of the same grace, and joint heirs to the same inheritance, should love one another. Who that has any pretensions to the Christian character does not feel and readily comply with the apostle's tender exhortation: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Eph. iv. 31, 32. This love by which the members of Christ's mystical body are cemented or fitly framed together, does not evapo-

rate in words or good wishes. It shows itself by acts of ready and efficient beneficence. Neither is it confined within a narrow compass, or to a particular sect, but extends to the whole household of faith. Wherever any of the features of the Master are discoverable, whether in the stranger or the intimate companion, there a brother is recognized and loved. Thus fitly framed together, the whole groweth into an holy temple in the Lord. The building is not yet completed. The workmen are still at work. Fresh materials are constantly coming in. Additions are making daily to the Church of such as shall be saved. But the angel charged with the preaching of the everlasting gospel to them that dwell on the earth, has not yet finished his flight through the symbolical heavens. The word of life has not yet been preached to every creature. The heralds of the cross, however, are gone, and going forth in all directions; and the way is rapidly preparing for their instructions to be conveyed in all the living languages of the globe. Amidst the revolutions of empires, and the infatuated struggles of worldly ambition, the wheel of Providence, unimpeded by the puny efforts of those who take counsel against the Lord and his anointed, is hastening forward the day, long predicted and ardently to be wished for, when the knowledge of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God:" "Of Zion it shall be said, this and that man was born in her; and the Highest himself shall establish her." She groweth into an holy temple in the Lord; a temple of which that of Solomon was but a faint emblem, a feeble and imperfect type; a temple, even now, of immeasurable extent, and destined to enlarge the curtains of its habitation, till all flesh shall see the salvation of our God—till Messiah shall reign from sea to sea, and from the river to

the ends of the earth; a temple consecrated and secured by the presence and power of the King of kings and Lord of lords. "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion; God is known in her palaces for a refuge—walk about Zion; and go round about her; tell the towers thereof; mark ye well her bulwarks; consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following: for this God is our God, for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." Ps. xlviii.

IV. "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Not only the Church universal, but particular churches, and even individual members are for an habitation of God, through the influence and indwelling of the Spirit. Blessed are they whose hopes are built on this sure foundation! They shall not make haste, or be confounded, world without end.

If our view of this passage of sacred Scripture be correct, it affords ground for two practical reflections:

1. How important it is that we build our hope of pardon and eternal life on the Lord Jesus Christ, in his mediatorial capacity! We are sinners; we have transgressed the law of our Maker; yet are we subjects of the divine government. The law is holy, just, and good; nor will its claims be given up, or its rigour mitigated. The Saviour tells us, that so far from destroying it, he came to establish it. This he did by sustaining its penalty, and by rendering perfect obedience to its precepts. Hence the necessity of faith in his blood as the propitiation for our sins, and in his righteousness for the justification of our persons, in the sight of a holy God. Let us, then, repose unqualified confidence in him. "We have redemption through his blood. He is the Lord our righteousness; neither is there salvation in any other."

2. If the agency of apostles and prophets has been employed in rearing the beautiful temple of which we have been speaking, is not the Christian ministry designed to carry forward and complete the glorious designs of redeeming mercy? And if so, ought not we who enjoy this blessed ministry of reconciliation to be thankful for it, and wait upon it with seriousness, reverence, and punctuality? Nay, more: should we not embrace every opportunity afforded us by Providence of extending the light of truth, the gospel of the grace of God to the millions of our race who are without hope, and ready to perish for lack of vision? Yes; the duty is too obvious to be contested. And yet, how humbling, how full of reproof the fact, that the missionary operations of Christendom are so feeble and limited, owing to the want of adequate support. We cannot procure means to furnish a tenth part of the missionary services which would be necessary to supply the spiritual wants of the poor and the ignorant of a perishing world. These things ought not so to be. It is a well established maxim in the kingdom of Christ, "that no man liveth unto himself." Had this maxim its due influence; did all those persons who bear the Christian name, feel its force, and reduce it to practice, the gospel might be preached to some millions of people now sitting in heathenish darkness, and groping their way into eternity ignorant of the true God, and without any just regard to the only Mediator and the way of life through his merits. O, when will Christians be roused and moved to exertions worthy their high and holy vocation! O, let us be concerned for the upbuilding of Zion, and for the ingathering of souls to the fold of Christ. And may He, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, inspire us with zeal for his glory, and furnish us unto the work of faith and labour of love to which we are called through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.



## LECTURE XII.

## THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST REVEALED.

EPHESIANS, III. 1—6.—For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, for you Gentiles; if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you-ward: how that, by revelation, he made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote afore, in few words: whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ, by the gospel.

THE faithful minister of the gospel may calculate on “enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” The first preachers of Christianity did more, in proportion to their number and opportunities, for the glory of God and the good of mankind, than any other set of men that ever lived; yet their trials were great and complicated beyond measure. Paul, in particular, was distinguished as well for his grievous afflictions as for his abundant labours in the cause of the Redeemer. Entering fully into the glorious and extensive design of the Christian scheme, and rising above the views of his countrymen, he became emphatically the apostle of the Gentiles. He taught that Christ had come not only as the glory of Israel, but as the light of all nations, and the Saviour of the world. It was his aim to prove that the ceremonial wall of partition which had enclosed the Jewish nation, and marked them as the peculiar people of God, was removed by the coming of Christ; that by the washing of regeneration, and the circumcision not made with hands, all people and kindreds of the earth were to share in the blessings of the gospel. His zealous vindication of these grand and interesting truths exposed

him peculiarly to the malice of his kinsmen, the professed friends of Moses and the law of ritual observances. Accordingly, while on a visit to Jerusalem, for the purpose of preaching and distributing alms to the poor disciples, he was arrested on false accusation as a disturber of the peace, and ordered to trial at Cæsarea, the seat of the provincial government. After passing through several scenes of insult and mockery, in the highest degree disgraceful to judicial proceedings, he was constrained to appeal to Cæsar, which resulted in his being sent to Rome, a prisoner in chains, there to await his doom. And there, during his imprisonment, he wrote this epistle to the Ephesians; which accounts for his language in the beginning of this chapter: "For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, for you Gentiles." His imprisonment was a consequence of his fidelity to Christ, and especially owing to his active and zealous labours among the Gentiles; but still he regarded himself as the property of Christ, and was happy in an opportunity of serving his cause by writing to those whom he could not visit in person. Mark, here, the unconquerable aim of a mind truly devoted to God. Paul, in his deepest affliction, does not relapse into idleness, or sink in despair. He was determined to work while the day of life lasted. When no longer permitted to go forth and speak to the people, he takes up his pen, not to write complaints against Providence, or even to solicit the sympathies of his friends, but to defend the truth, and delineate the glories of his blessed Lord.

Let Christians of the present day imitate, as occasion may offer, this charming example. Epistolary correspondence, on religious subjects, is a happy means of doing good. God has owned it extensively and remarkably, in very many instances. We can write to a friend, what, through diffidence,

or the want of a suitable opportunity, we may find it difficult to say to him, face to face. This is particularly the case, in regard to our near relatives, whom we are especially bound to exhort, when we see them in danger of being hardened, through the deceitfulness of sin. And, by this means, many a stupid conscience has been awakened, many a contrite heart comforted, and many a prodigal arrested, and reclaimed to God and happiness. Mark, also, the providence of Heaven bringing good out of evil. This epistle to the Ephesians was occasioned by Paul's imprisonment at Rome: and it is one of the richest and most precious portions of the Bible. It was a blessing to the church at Ephesus, not only, but to the primitive Christians in general; it was, doubtless, the means of enlightening many Jews and Pagans, and of bringing them to the knowledge of salvation: it has been a blessing, of immeasurable magnitude to the generations that have existed since the apostolic age; and it will unfold the riches of redeeming mercy to thousands of people yet unborn. Events, which at first glance, seem to threaten disaster to the Church, often prove, by a divine and overruling influence, the means of advancing her best and most vital interests. And this remark holds good in regard to our individual concerns. Let us adore the providence of our God, and rejoice that he reigns, and does the good pleasure of his holy will in heaven and earth.

“If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you-ward:”—As Paul had spent some time among the Ephesians before writing this letter to them, and as they must, therefore, have heard of his conversion and call to the Christian ministry, the sense of the former part of this verse would be more fully conveyed, by substituting in place of the doubtful particle, *if*, the

phrase, *in as much as*, or *seeing that* ye have heard, &c., which the original will bear, and often requires, in similar connections.

The principal matters contained in our text, may be arranged and considered under the following heads, viz:—The mystery, here spoken of, what is it?—The manner in which Paul received his knowledge of it:—The means which the Ephesians were to use to obtain a competent acquaintance with it:—And, its clear developement, by the Spirit, to the inspired teachers under the Christian dispensation.

I cannot but think that the word *mystery*, so often used in this Epistle, is employed by the sacred writer with some allusion to the frequent use of the same word among the people of Ephesus and vicinity, to express the secrets of their idolatrous worship. Those absurdities the apostle abhorred. He had laboured much to expose their turpitude, and turn the attention of the people away from all such lying vanities. And, in order to secure their regard for the religion of the gospel, he condescended to use a term, with which they were familiar; taking care to explain the sense, in which he used it, as occasion offered, and as their minds might be prepared by divine grace to receive the truth in love, and mix it with faith. By *mystery*, Paul, in most instances, means the glorious plan of redemption, by the incarnation and death of Christ, as he explains it in his first Epistle to Timothy, iii. 16: “And, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” All this is mysterious, as it transcends the comprehension of the human mind; yet it is capable of being known, when revealed, and of being approved to the saving of the soul, through the teaching and influence of the Holy Spirit.

But the thing intended by the term mystery, in this place, is the happy union of persons of all nations, under the gospel dispensation, in participating the blessings of divine grace, and the privileges of God's people; as is plain from what is said in the 6th verse of our text: "That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ, by the gospel." That is, that they should be joint heirs to the inheritance of eternal glory; should be united with Jewish believers, as members of the same body, the Church, and partake in the blessings promised to Abraham and his spiritual seed, through Christ, the Redeemer, and the desire of nations. This, to the Jews, under the blinding influence of prejudice and bigotry, was an inscrutable, because it was an unwelcome mystery. The spirit of prophecy had given repeated intimations of the gracious design; but they remained in a great degree ignorant of it, partly, because of the darkness of the dispensation under which they lived, and chiefly, because of the pride and selfishness of their hearts. Of this mystery, Paul while a Jew, was as ignorant as any of his countrymen; which leads us to notice

2. The way in which he obtained such a knowledge of it, as determined him to publish and vindicate it, at the risk of ease, affluence, liberty and life: "*How that by revelation, he made known unto me the mystery.*" He, no doubt, refers to the memorable appearance of Christ to him, when on his way to Damascus. There it was that the whole plan of redeeming love was disclosed to his view, with a light and power invincible. The glory was too much for mortal vision. The infuriate persecutor drops his bloody designs. The Goliath of Judaism, the pupil of Gamaliel, with all his mental energy, and stores of learning, faints and falls, and becomes blind, under the insupportable

weight and insufferable splendours of that stupendous mystery of godliness, whose influence reaches back to the creation, and forward to the dissolution of the present world; and which, by the gradual disclosure of its benign effects, is destined to show unto the principalities and powers of Heaven, the manifold wisdom of God throughout the all-absorbing cycle of eternity. No wonder that Paul, after such a heavenly vision, should determine to know nothing but Christ and him crucified. He received his knowledge of the gospel directly from the divine Author and Finisher of our faith—from him who, as a faithful witness, could say: "I am the way, the truth, and the life"—from him, who is the propitiation for the sins of the world, and the end of the law, for righteousness, to all that believe. He had seen the just one; had heard his voice, and felt the redeeming power of his grace; had obtained large views of the efficacy of his blood to cleanse from all sin; was convinced, beyond a peradventure, that he was the only Saviour, that he had come to seek and to save that which was lost, that whosoever would, might have life through his name. In one word, by the revelation of Jesus Christ Paul saw that, under the gospel dispensation, "neither circumcision availed any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature,"—that all distinctions of Greek and Jew, of learned and unlearned, clean and unclean, were of no account; but that Christ was all, and in all to the glory of God, the Father.

3. Nor is the knowledge of these things confined to Paul and the other inspired writers. By due attention, we may obtain such an acquaintance with them, as shall serve all the purposes of piety and usefulness. Of this the apostle reminds the Ephesians, and all others, who may have an opportunity of perusing the sacred oracles: "As I wrote afore,

in few words; whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." He refers to what he had written, in the preceding part of this epistle; which he advises them to examine and consider with care and seriousness, in order that they may, with him, acquire a competent knowledge of the mysterious love and power of Christ, as manifested in the work of redemption. And, as "all the Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and as it is profitable for doctrine, reproof, and instruction in righteousness," is it not greatly important that we should read, and use all proper means to understand it? If God has given the Bible as a rule of faith and practice, we are certainly bound to read it, to study it, to ponder its contents, that we may learn our duty and find the way of salvation. All this is plain and undeniable. And yet, how many there are, even of those who profess to revere the Scripture as the word of God, who remain from childhood to old age grossly ignorant of its inestimable instructions. It is too commonly regarded, as a volume of inscrutable mystery. But this notion, certainly, goes to impeach the wisdom and goodness of God. If it is unintelligible, why did he reveal it? And why does the Saviour charge us to search the Scriptures, and his apostles exhort us to be doers of the word, and not hearers only, to "let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, in all wisdom," and speak of these Scriptures being able to make us wise unto salvation? Certainly, in the judgment of God and the inspired penmen, the Bible is intelligible, so far, at least, as is necessary to all practical purposes of life and godliness. True, it reveals a scheme of salvation transcendently great and wonderful. There are things in it, which at present, we cannot fully comprehend; but, through grace, we can believe, and adore, and wait for instruction at the feet of

celestial wisdom. This has been found practicable by the pious in all ages. The word of truth has furnished the matter of their song in the house of their pilgrimage, has taught them where to look for pardoning mercy and saving grace; it has dispelled the gloom of death, and poured upon the grave some faint, but cheering rays of the light of heaven. And why may it not do the same for you? It has lost none of its efficacy. It is the word of the Lord, and abideth for ever. Read it, then, and read it with an honest and strong desire to know the mystery of Christ; to know his love, his saving power, and amazing grace, the efficacy of his sacrifice, the extent, the perpetuity and glory of his kingdom: "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord." We proceed,

4. To notice the full developement of the mystery in question, under the Christian dispensation, as is indicated in these words: "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." In all ages of the world, anterior to the coming of Christ, there were some intimations afforded to mankind respecting his character and mediatorial work; some rays of hope that a Redeemer was provided, and that he should be clearly manifested in due time. In these indications of mercy there was a wise and beautiful progression. Like the morning dawn, the Sun of righteousness arose upon the world with a radiance that grew brighter and brighter till the perfect day. Abraham knew more than Noah; David more than Moses; Isaiah and Daniel, glowing with prophetic ardour, and touched with a coal from the altar, describe the mystery of God incarnate, in language strongly resembling that of the Evangelists. Yet, it was not till the *substance* appeared, that all shadows gave place. But when the Son of God



had finished the work which his Father had given him to do, and had returned to his native heavens, the Spirit came down, pursuant to his promise, to guide the apostles into all truth. Then, every film was removed from the eye of faith. In Christ crucified, the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation, were seen, embodied, the promises and types of all preceding dispensations. All men, every where are commanded to repent; the remission of sins, through the blood of atonement, is clearly taught. The apostolic commission is, "Go preach the gospel to every creature;" and the gracious invitation is published to all people, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely!" Thus was "the mystery of Christ revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets, by the Spirit." And what is this mystery, revealed to the world, through apostles and prophets, by the Spirit? Why, that the Gentiles, i. e. persons of all nations and descriptions may now, through faith in the Redeemer, become interested in the blessings of gospel salvation. Glorious message, glad tidings, welcome news to all people! Are you prepared to accept the offer, and lay hold of the hope set before you? The message comes to you with an amazing amount of evidence that it is from God. It is on the accumulated evidence of six thousand years that the gospel puts forth its claims to your acceptance. How can you reject it with impunity? What excuse will you have if you die in sin, and sink into the blackness of eternal night, from the blaze of evangelical truth that beams on your path-way to the judgment seat of Christ? The darkness of the typical dispensation has passed away, the true light now shineth; the desire of the Gentiles is come; the prison doors are thrown open; the word of promise has gone out into all the world: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life

freely.” “Turn to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope.” God waits to be gracious. Flee from the wrath to come—lay hold on eternal life.

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## LECTURE XIII.

### THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST.

EPHESIANS, III. 7—11.—Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power: Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

THE word *whereof*, with which our text begins, manifestly refers to the word *gospel* in the close of the preceding verse. Of this gospel, Paul informs us that he was made a minister by the grace of God and the effectual operation of divine power. This he mentions, not in a way of boasting, but to magnify his office, and to bespeak due attention to his public ministrations. His design is to show that he did not rush into the ministry uncalled or unfurnished for the work. He was apprehended of Christ for this very purpose, and was so powerfully inclined to the service, so eminently and remarkably qualified for it, that his duty in undertaking it was plain and pressing. Constrained by the love, and urged by the authority of the Redeemer, he yielded prompt and cordial obedience to the heavenly vision. It must have been a clear view of the truth and importance of Christianity, accompanied

by a strong sense of the obligation which he was under to devote himself to its defence and propagation that drew from him that impassioned exclamation, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" 1 Cor. ix. 16. His consciousness of having been divinely designated to the ministerial office must have contributed largely to support him amidst the sore tribulations attendant on its sacred functions; while his luminous views of truth and duty rendered him extensively useful as a labourer in the Lord's vineyard. And it is highly desirable that every preacher of the gospel should be able to say, with Paul, "I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God, given unto me by the effectual working of his power." It is not, indeed, to be expected that a man's call to the Christian ministry in our time, shall be marked by such palpable and irresistible evidence as attended that of the apostles and evangelists; yet that all those whom Christ sends forth to preach his gospel, and dispense the memorials of his love, are made ministers by the grace of God and a divine operation on their hearts, is a truth which cannot, I think, on scriptural ground, be called in question. Some, it is to be feared, engage in this work who are not called of God, as was Aaron; and the preaching of such may, in some instances, be blessed to the salvation of souls; for God often owns his truth, and makes it efficacious, even when spoken by persons who neither love it themselves, nor are commissioned to propagate it. We must also admit, that some who began to preach from wrong motives, and without any experimental acquaintance with true religion, have been afterwards renewed by divine grace, and made faithful labourers in the gospel harvest. Yet, unquestionably, the sacred office ought not to be rashly assumed; nor should any person be invested with it who does not possess hopeful piety, con-

nected with a good education and "aptness to teach." If "the blind lead the blind," it is not difficult to foresee the probable consequence. A man may preach the gospel because it is a reputable business, or because it will furnish him with the means of subsistence; and, with no higher views than these, may acquit himself to the general satisfaction of his fellow mortals: but if he does not relish the work for the truth's sake; if he does not feel the love of Christ constraining him, he cannot rationally calculate on much happiness, nor on any great degree of success. There must be an intolerable awkwardness in a man's being engaged in an employment which does not suit his taste. Every minister of the gospel is professedly and peculiarly the servant of Jesus Christ. But to serve a master whom one does not love and repose confidence in, is the veriest drudgery that can be named. Nor is it probable that Christ would, to any considerable extent, employ in the advancement of his kingdom the services of a man who does not love that kingdom, or prefer its prosperity to all earthly and selfish considerations. But on the other hand, the man who is made a minister by the grace and effectual operation of God upon his heart, will have the satisfaction to know that he is engaged in the work assigned him by his Maker and Redeemer. To him it will therefore be a pleasant work. He will be in his chosen element while employed in the ministry of the word. The love of the Master whom he serves will make his yoke easy and his burden light. And whatever may be his visible success, he will lay all his gifts, graces and acquirements at the feet of Jesus; and though he may, as Mr. Whitefield once observed, "be weary *in* the Lord's service, yet he will never be weary *of* it." And as ministers ought to be pious and faithful, so we should regard those who appear to be such, as

the messengers of Christ, and receive the gospel which they preach as the word of Him who liveth and abideth for ever. And remember, that the only true and legitimate end of preaching and hearing the gospel is, that we may all repent, and believe, and be saved, to the praise of glorious grace: "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God:" 1 Cor. iv. 1. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves:" Jas. i. 22.

In the next verse of the text we have Paul's views of the Christian ministry, together with a strong expression of the sense which he entertained of his own unworthiness of that high and holy office.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Here is an instance of genuine and unaffected humility. Paul was an eloquent and beautiful writer, yet we find him, in this instance, committing a solecism in language for no other purpose, it would seem, than to invent a phrase which should express, with peculiar emphasis, the profound sense he had of his unworthiness of the honourable service to which the Redeemer had called him. "Less than the least" is what grammarians call a comparative formed from the superlative degree of the adjective *little*—a departure from the obvious principles of language, which cannot, with the least colour of reason, be imputed either to the ignorance or negligence of one who was writing for the sacred canon, under the inspiration of God. Viewing the gospel ministry as the most exalted and desirable office with which a man can be invested in the present world; and recollecting, with shame and self-abasement, his pride, his unbelief, and malicious designs against the glorious

Saviour and his unoffending disciples, he falls in the dust at the throne of mercy, and from the fullness of a heart overwhelmed with a sense of obligation, he exclaims, "Unto *me*, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given!" And without doubt a Christian should be humble; a Christian minister should be so in an eminent and exemplary degree. Humility is the basis of the Christian character; and it will always be found in company with faith and hope in Christ. But Paul was a star of the first magnitude; his humility, like his other religious attainments, was uncommonly great; and few, if any of us, can adopt his language on this subject. It is probably too strong for our feelings; and in our confessions, as well as petitions at the throne of grace, we should endeavour to use expressions that shall, according to our best judgment, convey the real state of our views and desires. "Less than the least of all saints." Observe, here, Paul, in his humble confessions of his own insignificance, does not deny what God had done for his soul. He was a saint, a subject of redeeming grace. The Lord had given him a new heart and a right spirit, a penitent heart and a spirit of meekness; had set his seal upon him, and placed him among his children; he was of the household of faith, and of the family of God. This he could not, would not, durst not deny. But in that blessed family he was resolved to occupy the lowest place. This is well enough. The lowly and the contrite ones will not be overlooked or forgotten by their heavenly Father. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Remember it, believer, when you get such views of your vileness as incline you to doubt whether you have any part or lot in the great salvation. Your very sense of sin is a favourable symptom. It is the work of the Spirit, acknowledge it; give God thanks for it;

and confide, not only in his mercy, but in his truth and faithfulness: for, "that good work which he hath begun in you, he will perform till the day of Jesus Christ."

"To preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Here is the definite and appropriate business of a gospel minister. Paul's ministerial duty lay chiefly among the Gentiles. That of the ordinary minister lies wherever, and among what people soever the providence of God may place him. In all places, and among all people, the work is one and the same. It consists in "preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ." What are these riches? The word *unsearchable* premonishes us, that we can neither comprehend them fully in our own minds, nor exhibit them to others in their pure and proper colours. Yet as they are to be preached, they are certainly capable of being known, to a certain extent, and of being loved and approved. "The Greek word, translated *unsearchable*, says a learned commentator\* is exceedingly well chosen here. It refers to the footsteps of God, the plans he had formed, the dispensations which he had published, and the innumerable providences which he had combined to prepare, mature and bring to full effect and view, his gracious designs in the salvation of a ruined world, by the incarnation, passion, death and resurrection of his only begotten Son. There were in these schemes and providences such riches, such an abundance, such a variety, as could not be comprehended by the capacious and inspired mind of the apostle Paul." But this view of the subject is too general and extended to be considered to advantage, within the limits to which we must confine ourselves in this article of discourse. By the riches of Christ,

\* Dr. Adam Clarke.

the apostle, I suppose, intends his personal excellence, his sufferings and death, his exaltation, infinite fulness, and all-sufficiency for the eternal salvation of all ranks and descriptions of sinners. His person is divine and transcendently glorious. The sacrifice of his blood is the propitiation for the sin of the world. By his exaltation in the human nature, which he assumed, he is become head over all things to the Church; he reigns in the highest heavens, to give repentance and the remission of sins to as many as shall trust and obey him. "He rules the world with truth and grace." "It hath pleased the Father, that in him, all fulness should dwell;" and that fulness is inexhaustible; for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. A condemned and ruined world is yet spared, and permitted to hear the tidings of grace and forgiveness, in consequence of his mediation. Every descendant of Adam is completely at his disposal. All power is his, to save, and to destroy. He magnified the law of Jehovah, satisfied its demands, secured the rights of the divine government, and made his soul an offering for sin; and as his reward, or as the pleasant fruits of his mighty acts and amazing sufferings, he is to see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied; is to judge the quick and the dead; and is for ever to settle the destinies of all men and angels. And, while possessed of this immense and matchless power, he tells the world, in the volume of his truth, "That he came to seek and to save that which was lost;" and to be the author of eternal redemption to all them that obey him. His promises are exceeding great and precious—"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;—Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out;—If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with



me." The Son of man came, not to destroy the world, but that the world, through him, might have life." And, as our warrant to believe and trust him, the sacred historians and all the inspired penmen assure us, as with one voice, that during his public ministry here on earth, he performed such works of power and grace as confessedly surpassed all created skill and agency; that he arose from the dead agreeably to his own declaration; that he communicated miraculous powers to his apostles; that he ascended to heaven in a cloud, that, about ten days after his ascension, the Spirit descended, pursuant to his promise, on the multitude assembled at Jerusalem; that he saved many of the chief of sinners, among whom the author of our text reckons himself a remarkable instance; and, in a word, "that he is able to save, to the uttermost, all that come to God by him."

Let this suffice as an outline of the rich truths and inestimable blessings, which the minister of the gospel is to preach; that is, to exhibit, illustrate, and press upon the faith and serious regard of his hearers; and if these doctrines fail to affect, to improve and turn mankind from darkness to light, and from the power of sin unto God; if these do not awaken men to a sense of their sin, and a concern for their salvation; if these provisions of mercy, love, truth, and grace, in sweet accord, do not command attention, and persuade sinners to renounce their evil ways and return to him who made them, for shelter and everlasting life, no other means can be of any avail. Heaven has no other scheme to propose for the recovery of fallen man, but that which is founded on the sacrifice and righteousness of Christ. Here then, the preacher is to take his stand; here he is to abide at his peril. Though the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing; though the Jews require a sign, and the

Greeks seek after wisdom, the gospel minister, standing in view of the cross, is to cry continually, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" Nor let him fear that this style of preaching shall be without effect. To them that are called, and to all that believe, it is the power of God unto salvation.

"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."

In this verse, the apostle seems to refer to the harmonizing influence of Christianity: that is, its effect in breaking down the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles. On this subject, some remarks were made in a preceding lecture: we shall not detain you long upon it in this. By "the fellowship of the mystery," is evidently meant, the communion which believers of all nations have in the plan of salvation revealed in the gospel. And to make all men see and acknowledge this, as one distinguishing excellence of the Christian dispensation, was an object which our apostle kept prominently in view while preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. This delightful fellowship, this essential unity of faith, hope, and charity, this unison of sympathy, interest and expectations, through the common Redeemer, had been hid in God from the beginning of the world. That is, it had not been clearly revealed, nor fully understood, even by pious men who lived before the Christian era. But now that it is revealed, it is remarkable and worthy of all acceptation. It is a feature of our holy religion which strongly indicates its divine origin. Take real Christians, wheresoever you can find them, bring them together from the four quarters of the globe, give them a common language, let them converse on religious subjects, and you shall

find their views and feelings, their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows, substantially harmonizing. Let them hear a sermon on the riches of Christ, and they will be edified. Allow them an opportunity, and if not shackled by sectarian views and habits, they will commune together on the symbols of his body and blood. The reason is, they have been all taught of God; they are one spirit, and that is the Spirit of Christ; are governed by one law, and that is the law of love.

The last clause of this verse, as it seems to be introduced incidentally and without any very intimate connection with the main subject, we shall pass over, after making upon it a single remark. Whether we understand the creation of all things here ascribed to Jesus Christ, as meaning all things material or all things spiritual, it obviously involves the doctrine of his true and proper Divinity; for creative power is an incommunicable attribute of Jehovah, and, therefore, cannot be delegated to any subordinate agent or created being.

“To the intent that, now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God; according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Three inferences will close our lecture:

1. Let candidates for the ministry see to it, carefully, that they are made ministers by the effectual working of God's gracious power. This is your only security for usefulness and comfort. To engage in this service uncalled, is fearful presumption. All good men are not designed to be preachers of the gospel.

2. Education societies, and the judicatories of the Church should scrupulously guard against the introduction of irreligious and uncalled men unto the sacred office. The temptation to laxity on this

point is very great, because of the loud and pressing demand for labourers in the Lord's vineyard.

3. But, on the other hand, let us not suppose for a moment that intellect and mental culture may be safely dispensed with. The work of the ministry is great and arduous, and calls for the best talents consecrated by ardent piety and unwavering faith in God the Saviour.



## LECTURE XIV.

### PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIAN CHRISTIANS.

EPHESIANS, III. 12—21.—In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him: wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named; that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

In a former lecture we had occasion to observe Paul's disposition to make the best of the situation in which Providence had placed him, by writing for the edification of those whom he was not permitted to visit in person. We are here called upon to notice the same disposition manifested by his fervent intercessions on behalf of his beloved Ephesian converts to the faith of the gospel. His sufferings and privations he considered as owing, in part at least, to his zeal for their good; yet, so far from

courting their sympathies, as he might have done by describing the sorrows and hardships which he endured in their service, and for the honour of Christ, he exhorts them not to faint or be discouraged at his sufferings in the good cause. His imprisonment and its attendant evils, patiently and joyfully endured by him, was calculated rather to afford them an occasion of glorying in the cross, as it furnished evidence that a religion which prepared the mind to make such sacrifices as he had made, and which sustained the soul in such trials as he had experienced without murmuring or complaint, must be of heavenly origin, and worthy to be professed and adhered to at the risk of all other possessions and enjoyments. This I take to be the import of his language in the second verse of our context: "Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory."

We have before us one of the most interesting and instructive instances of intercessory prayer that is to be found in sacred Scripture. By intercessory prayer is meant, the asking of blessings for our fellow men. This of Paul for the Ephesians is instructive, not only as it warrants us to pray for others in like manner, but as it teaches us the ground on which we are to draw near to God in this solemn duty, and indicates the nature and magnitude of the benefits we may expect at his hand for ourselves and those whose case we bear on our hearts before the throne of grace. Let us give serious attention to the subject; and may the Lord dispel our darkness, raise our views, and give us understanding in all things.

The first particular that claims our notice, is the medium of our approach unto the Father of mercies in prayer: that is, by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, as is clearly taught in these words, "In whom we have boldness and access, with confi-

dence, by the faith of him." The relative *whom* has for its antecedent, Christ Jesus, in the preceding verse. In him, or through his mediation it is that sinners of the human family have access into the presence of the Holy One of Israel. Nor is there any other way. In reply to the complaint of Thomas, John xiv. 5, 6, "Lord we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" the Saviour says, "I am the way and the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." This declaration is positive and unequivocal, admitting of no dispute with those who acknowledge the authority of him who uttered it. A holy God can have no intercourse with unholy creatures, except through a Mediator. The purity of his nature forbids it; and he has admonished us, in his word, not to expect it. They, therefore, who reject the mediation of Christ, and who, so far as they acknowledge God at all, rush into his presence in their own name, pleading their own merits, and preferring their claims to divine favour, have neither reason nor revelation to warrant their hope that he will either accept their worship or pardon their sins. Let them look well to this matter; and consider, betimes, the folly, the madness, the extreme wickedness of jeoparding their souls from pride and a vainglorious confidence in the flesh. "He that hateth me, hateth my Father also." John xv. 23. But the Christian, by faith in the Redeemer, has not only access into the presence chamber of the glorious King of heaven and earth, but great freedom and filial confidence in presenting supplications, intercessions and thanksgivings at the throne of grace, in the name of the Lord Jesus. Such honour have all they who worship God in spirit and in truth, offering to him their desires for things agreeable to his will, with confession of their sins and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies through

him who is the way to the Father, and the divinely constituted channel through which all blessings flow to sinful man. Improve this inestimable privilege, then, believer. It has been provided for you at amazing expense; and had it not been provided by free grace, you had remained for ever shut out from the light of hope and the joys of heaven. But you are brought nigh by the blood of sprinkling. Abide in your place. Cultivate fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, through the indwelling of the eternal Spirit helping your infirmities. The shadow of the Almighty is the place of peace and safety. Here temptation will lose its power, and Satan flee from you. Here you may feed on hidden manna, and grow in grace till you attain to the stature of a perfect man in Christ. Ask, and you shall receive blessings for yourself, for your friends, for your enemies, and for the Church of God.

Observe, in the next place, the humble attitude which Paul assumes in his intercessions: "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." From this and similar instances recorded of the apostles and primitive Christians, some infer that we should always kneel in prayer. But while we admit that this posture is suitable and becoming, when it can be observed with comfort and convenience, we do not regard it as at all essential to the acceptable performance of our devotional exercises. In the closet, and in the family, it may usually be observed, and is preferred by many, if not most of our denomination. But in public assemblies, as they are frequently situated in buildings not constructed for the purpose, or, as is extensively the case in many parts of our country, in the open air, and on the damp ground, kneeling would be very awkward and inconvenient. Besides, it is well known that persons in sickness, or under the in-

firmities of old age, in some cases, cannot take the attitude in question. That pious people in ancient times generally used either kneeling or prostration, is highly probable. But the posture is a mere circumstance that does not affect the sincerity or the acceptableness of prayer. I know no instance of prayer more humble or more acceptable than that of the publican, (Luke, xviii. 13,) who said, *standing afar off*, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Yet let me not be understood to condemn the kneeling posture, or to find any fault with those who ordinarily use it. My remarks are only intended to show that no particular attitude is essential to the right performance of the duty of prayer. A reverential posture is seemly; sitting, when nature does not require it, is perhaps exceptionable in this respect. In my view, and I am not aware that the word of God has decided otherwise, standing is as expressive of reverence as either kneeling or prostration; but "let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind."

"The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." What an inviting and attractive view these words give us of the great and glorious object of our worship! He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is his only begotten; his elect, in whom he delighteth, whom he regardeth with infinite and unceasing complacency, and for whose sake he is ready to bestow eternal life and blessedness upon the chief of sinners. But, if we are true believers, Jesus Christ is our Lord not only, he is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. "They that are joined to the Lord are one spirit." Nor is this all; Jesus Christ is our Redeemer. He has procured our release from the curse of the law—has paid the ransom for our souls—regards us as his friends—has given us the memorials of his love, and is gone to heaven to guard our interests, and to prepare a



place for us. What a near and endearing relation, then, do you sustain, believer, to the infinite and all-sufficient Jehovah! He who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ by an ineffable oneness of nature and essence, has been pleased to make you his child by regenerating you, and adopting you into his holy and blessed family! On this great and happy family God has, through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, put his name; and hence they are called "the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty." The perfect security of every member of the family lies in such exceeding great and precious promises as the following: "None can pluck them out of my Father's hand; He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee; I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

With such clear and comfortable views of the way of access to God, and of the confidence and freedom which he allows his children to exercise in prayer, the apostle draws near the mercy-seat, and solicits, in behalf of the believers in Ephesus,

First, "That God would grant them, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." The distinction of body and soul, of flesh and spirit, of visible circumstances and mental felicity, is constantly kept up in the sacred writings. The Christian, like other individuals of the same species, is composed of a material body and an intellectual principle—a clay tenement, occupied by a spiritual tenant—an outer and an inner man. Of these, the latter is by far the more important. The health, the ease, and the vigour of the former is, other things being equal, desirable. But the good estate of the one does not involve that of the other. The body may be in high health and fare sumptuously, while the soul is sickly and ready to perish for want of the bread of life. On the other hand, the

soul may be serene, or even triumphant, while the clay tabernacle is emaciated with disease, or ready to fall before the rude shocks of adversity. In the Christian warfare, the foes within are more numerous, subtle, and dangerous than those that are without. The consecrated warrior must, therefore, be strengthened with might in the inner man. His faith must be confirmed, his views enlightened, his affections elevated, his hopes encouraged, and his heart fixed, trusting in God. All this is accomplished by the agency of the Divine Spirit, ordinarily, in the use of instituted means. The apostle prayed that the Ephesians might enjoy the blessing in large measure. Not merely according to the natural import of the words employed in the petition, but "according to the riches of God's glory; or, as the expression may be rendered, according to his glorious riches—the riches of his glorious grace which he bestows, and is ready to bestow abundantly, through Jesus Christ, on all that believe. Let this idea encourage the weak, the faint-hearted, the trembling disciple of Jesus Christ. O, thou of little faith; wherefore dost thou doubt! Thou art not straitened in God; be not straitened in thine own desires and expectations. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has glorious riches, sufficient strength, and dauntless courage to confer on those who are fighting the good fight of faith. "Arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Go to the throne of grace with filial confidence and holy boldness, and you shall be strengthened with might in the inner man, by the Spirit, according to the riches of his glory.

The next petition in this remarkable prayer is, "that Christ may dwell in the hearts of the Ephesians by faith." On this point, so often brought into view in the ministry of the gospel, we need not in this place expatiate largely. It is by faith in

Christ that the believer receives the sanctifying influences of the Spirit, and all those consolations which animate him in the discharge of duty, and in running the race set before him. And this, like every other gracious principle, is of a progressive nature. There are different degrees of faith, though, when genuine, it is always the same in kind. The Scriptures speak of babes, youths, and veterans in Christ. He often complained of the unbelief—that is, of the weakness of the faith of his disciples. “And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” Luke, xxii. 31, 32. Most of the troubles and failings of Christians arise out of a weak and wavering faith. They have need, therefore, to pray each for himself, and all for one another, that this prime principle of religious comfort and spiritual activity may gain strength day by day, and be continually in vigorous exercise. Now, Christ, who is the author and the finisher of our faith, has laid a foundation for it in his word of promise, and furnished in his ordinances the means of its nourishment. And it is when we entertain a realizing sense of the truth of his word, and when we discern and feed upon him in the institutions of his grace, that he may be said to dwell in our hearts—that is, to have a settled residence and full possession there; supplying our spiritual wants, controlling and directing all the emotions of our souls. In this way, faith becomes the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. Yes, Christians, be assured, the more richly the word, the Spirit, and the grace of the Redeemer dwell in your hearts by faith, the more inaccessible you will be to the assaults of Satan; the more decisive will be your victory over the world, and the

more clear and comfortable will be your views of an interest in the divine favour: "Christ in you, the hope of glory!"

But faith is not a solitary grace. It is a plant of the Lord's planting; and love is the soil in which it thrives, and blooms, and bears the fruits of righteousness. Hence, in the prayer before us, it is added, "That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." The main subject here, is the love of Christ for sinners; or, which is substantially the same thing, the love of God for our ruined world, manifested in the person and mediation of Christ. This is the source of all true and evangelical love as exercised by man towards the Creator, and his intelligent creatures. "We love him because he first loved us." 1 John, iv. 19. The believer's love is but the re-acting of that which glowed with intense ardour in the bosom of the Son of God, when he came to lay down his life a ransom for many: just as the moral beauty of the glorified saint is but the reflection of his image who is the brightness of the Father's glory.

The apostle describes the nature of this love of Christ by a figure taken from agriculture. It is a deep and fertile soil, in which the Christian is to be rooted and grounded, that he may derive thence all that nutriment that may be necessary to his growth in grace, and to render him fruitful in every good word and work. The meaning, I suppose, is, that the believer should acknowledge and consider with the utmost attention and seriousness, the amazing love of the Redeemer in dying for lost and sinful men; that he may feel its constraining influence, and the mighty obligation which it lays on the redeemed sinner to glorify, to serve, and

love the Lord that bought him. To assist the mind in its endeavours to conceive rightly of this great subject, the love of Christ is further represented in reference, probably, to its extensive and ever-during effects as a stupendous edifice, whose length and breadth, height and depth, we are to survey, and, as is the aim of all saints, labour to comprehend. But it is incomprehensible. No created intellect can grasp it—no pencil can delineate it—no imagination can seize upon its vast dimensions. However closely and devoutly you may consider it, you will be obliged to conclude, as Job does concerning the divine nature: “It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.” Job, xi. 8, 9. Its length may indicate its perpetuity, from everlasting to everlasting; its breadth its comprehensiveness, enclosing in its embrace sinners of all nations and ages; its depth may point us to the horrible pit where it finds its objects; and its height the eminence of celestial glory to which it elevates them.

“And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” But how can that be known which passeth knowledge? The expression may at first glance appear paradoxical; yet it is easily explained. The verb, *to know*, is used in two senses in Scripture; viz. 1. To be accurately acquainted with a person or thing; as when it is said of our Lord, “He knew what was in man.” 2. To approve or regard with complacency; as where it is said in the proceedings of the judgment day, “And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Here the meaning obviously is, that the Judge never approved of or acknowledged these workers of iniquity as his disciples. In the former sense, the love of Christ

passeth knowledge—it cannot be fully, completely, or scientifically known by any finite mind. In the latter sense, it is known, it is approved, and admired by every sincere believer; it is his song in the house of his pilgrimage, and it will be the theme of his high and ceaseless praises in the kingdom of glory.

“That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God!” The fulness of God in this connection, probably, means that communicative plenitude of blessings which he has in store for, and will, in due time, bestow upon the believing and redeemed soul. This is the consummation of the apostle’s request in behalf of the Ephesian Christians; and this will be the portion of every true believer in Christ. The whole soul, enlarged in its capacity, and cleansed from all the defilement of sin, shall be full of light and peace, love and joy, unspeakable, pure, and lasting as the throne of heaven and the bliss of angels. Be this your aim, your desire, your ardent prayer, to be filled with God, with the fulness of God, with all the fulness of the Great Eternal. This is the mark—this the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus. If you are the subject of redeeming grace, the object of everlasting love, you will not, you cannot be contented with small attainments in the divine life. You will die unto sin, and live more and more unto righteousness. You will go from strength to strength, from conquering to conquest, till an abundant entrance shall be administered unto you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

## LECTURE XV.

## THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE.

EPHESIANS, IV. 1—6.—I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

THE first three chapters of this epistle are chiefly doctrinal; the one from which our text is selected, together with the fifth and sixth, relate principally to the practical duties that arise out of the various relations which Christians sustain to their God, their Saviour, and their fellow men. In the introduction to his directions and exhortations on these subjects, the apostle reminds the Ephesians again of what he had mentioned before, that he was a prisoner of the Lord; i. e. that he was in bonds in consequence of his firm belief of the truth of the gospel, and his active and open vindication of the Lord's cause. And in entreating them to "walk worthy of their vocation," he brings to view in a very delicate and touching manner the advantages and comforts of their situation when contrasted with his: they were at liberty to go about doing good; he was in confinement, and could only write and pray for the prosperity of the Lord's kingdom: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Vocation and calling are terms of nearly the same import. A person's ordinary business, or occupation in life, is often said to be his calling; because God, in his providence,

seems to have called him to that particular business as the means of procuring a livelihood, and of contributing to the general interests of society. And, by a similar figure of speech, a man's walk, or manner of walking, is often used to denote his prevailing temper and conduct. The Christian's calling is high and holy; his spirit and deportment ought, therefore, to be pious, circumspect, and useful. His affections, aims, and pursuits should be governed by the precepts of the religion he professes. He should keep constantly in view, the great end of his vocation, and use with faith and diligence the means which his Lord has prescribed for its attainment. The prize of our high calling as disciples of Christ, is eternal life, in a way of holiness, and to the glory of divine grace. And to walk worthy of this glorious vocation is, to cultivate all those dispositions, and practise those duties, which God, in the ordinary course of his procedure, has connected with the sanctification of our nature, and the salvation of our souls. It is no doubt for want of due attention to these things, that many professing Christians have so little acquaintance with the consolations of religion; and that they are so conformed to the world, and so slightly distinguished from those persons who make no religious profession or pretensions. The learned Dr. Adam Clarke, though not in our view equally happy in all his theological sentiments, has an excellent remark on this subject: "As it is a very poor calling," says he, "by which a man cannot live, so it is a poor religion by which a man cannot get his soul saved. If, however, a man have an honest and useful trade, and employ himself diligently in labouring at it, he will surely be able to maintain himself by it. But without care, attention, and industry, he is not likely to get, even by this providential calling, the necessaries of life. In like manner, if a man do not walk worthy



of his heavenly calling, i. e. suitably to its prescriptions, spirit and design, he is not likely to get his soul saved unto eternal life. The best trade unpractised, will not support any man: the most pure and holy religion of the Lord Jesus unapplied, will save no soul. Many suppose, because they have a sound faith, that all is safe and well. As well might the mechanic, who knows he has a good trade, and that he understands the principles of it well, suppose it will maintain him, though he bring none of its principles into action by honest, assiduous, and well-directed labour."

Indeed, Christians, your vocation lays you under very special obligations to devote yourselves, heart and hand, to the service and views of Him who calls you into his kingdom, and grants you the privileges of his people. The Lord Almighty calls you to be his sons and daughters; he bids you come out from the world; to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works; to do good, and communicate blessings, as you have opportunity; to keep yourselves unspotted from the world; to bear about with you the dying of the Lord Jesus; to remember the grace of Him who, though rich, yet, for your sakes, became poor, that you might be rich; and who died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring you to God, save you from your sins, and raise you to glory. How strong and commanding are your inducements to live a holy life, to be continually engaged in promoting, either directly or indirectly, the cause of truth and righteousness! To perform the duties of the Christian profession is your business, as long as you live. This is your calling; your daily and hourly concern while on this earth. You are never to grow weary of praying, doing, and giving for the furtherance of the gospel. Nor are you to rest satisfied

with your religious attainments. The bread of yesterday will not suffice for to-day; nor that of to-day answer for to-morrow. You are to go from strength to strength, conquering and to conquer. The last enemy is death. Hence the necessity of receiving fresh and seasonable supplies from Him in whom all fulness dwells. You are not to feel yourself at liberty, after taking upon you the name of Christ and partaking of his ordinances, to live and act as other people do. Your good confession and sacramental engagements are but the visible tokens of your holy vocation. Henceforth and for ever you are to pursue this calling; to labour at it; to bring its principles into effective operation, and show that you relish it, and prefer it to every other kind of life; else you are not warranted to expect the end—everlasting glory. These observations are meant to apply to those only whom Providence affords time and opportunity to manifest the fruits of faith: and do not, therefore, interfere with the doctrine of salvation by free grace. The infant, the idiot, or even the convict on the gibbet, may be renewed by grace, and die, and go to heaven, without having voluntarily and actively engaged in the Christian calling. But these are cases aside from the ordinary course of redeeming mercy. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of means; and in promoting its interests, he employs to a great extent the agency of his people. He works in them by the enlightening and sanctifying influence of his Spirit; and they work for him in the several places assigned them in his vineyard. Good works are not indeed necessary as forming any part of the ground of our justification; but they are in ordinary cases necessary as the fruits of the Spirit, and as evidences that we are the subjects of that faith which not only justifies, instrumentally, but purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world:

“By their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

There is another thing which shows the importance of regarding religion as a calling, or as an every-day business. Constant, voluntary and cheerful attention to the duties of our Christian profession, is the way to form the temper and habits of heaven, and contributes, through grace, to effectuate a meetness for the inheritance, and a supreme relish for the holy employments of the saints in light. Remember, then, religion is not like a piece of property, which, when obtained, you may lay by safely till you have need of it, as for instance in the hour of death, or at the day of judgment. It is a heaven-born, ever-living principle of grace, which is to act and to act wisely, righteously, usefully, and more and more vigorously, till it issue in glory. Grace is glory in the bud: glory is grace consummated. Never allow yourselves, therefore, to grow lax in worshipping God, in celebrating his ordinances, or in contributing, “as the Lord hath prospered you,” to the necessities of the poor, and the spread of the gospel. These duties constitute a part of your training for heaven; and the more you abound in these labours of love, the more happy you will be, both here and hereafter. By and by, your Lord will come and dismiss you from the field, and take you to that rest which remaineth for his people, to that fulness of joy, to that haven secure from the storms of life’s troubled ocean; that welcome asylum from all the toils of the Christian warfare, where you will learn, with wonder and delight unspeakable and everlasting, that it was not a vain thing to serve him.

The apostle in this exhortation to the Ephesians,

seems to regard them chiefly in their social, or associated capacity; as a society of Christians professing the religion of Christ, and from whom the world had a right to expect an exemplification of the influence of Christianity on the disposition and conduct of mankind. Hence the qualities which he mentions, and recommends to them in their endeavours to walk worthy of the calling wherewith they were called, are of the social kind: "lowliness and meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, love, unity, and peace." These qualities, you recollect, are highly commended by our Saviour in his sermon on the mount; and by him they were fully and uniformly exemplified. They are, therefore, in God's esteem, qualities of the highest moral worth; and, of course, are indispensable to the formation of a character really useful, dignified, and honourable. Lowliness and meekness are nearly synonymous terms. Humility will probably convey the idea intended by both. This is clearly a characteristic of the religion of the Bible; and it is peculiar to the religion of the Bible. To Paganism, as a religious system, it is unknown. The ancient Greeks and Romans had not a word, in either of their copious languages, to express it in an evangelical sense; and infidels have always affected to despise it. David Hume never mentions it but with contempt and misrepresentation, as if it were a mean and abject disposition. But it is neither: it is the effect of truth discovered, felt, and approved. It arises from a just sense of our weakness and dependence. Pride, whether it be the pride of fortune, of family, of place, of power, or of learning, is the spawn of ignorance. Angels are humble; but they are neither mean, nor of an abject spirit. The Lord of angels was meek and lowly of heart. Let his disciples be clothed with humility; it is their most beautiful garment.

“With long-suffering; forbearing one another in love.” The disposition commended in this expression, is of high importance. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit of God, and is directly opposed to that irascible and revengeful temper which strongly marks the depravity of the human heart. A measure of forbearance is essential to the existence of society for any considerable time, or with mutual comfort and advantage to its members. Mankind, though social in their nature, and very dependent on one another for the ordinary comforts of life, are so imperfect, so selfish, and so diverse in their judgments on all subjects, that collisions, provocations and matters of offence are constantly and certainly to be expected. To avoid these evils entirely is impossible, unless you retire to the cave of the hermit, or the cloister of the monk: and even there your peace would be disturbed by the bad passions of your own mind. The only way to secure even a moderate share of comfort in our intercourse with one another, is to cultivate a mild, placable, and forbearing temper. Accordingly, most men exhibit less or more of this amiable spirit. But the principle from which it is to be exercised, is the criterion by which we are to judge whether our forbearance be of the genuine kind or not.

“Forbearing one another in love.” Love is the principle. And here, it is to be feared, multitudes fall far short of the gospel standard. It is true that forbearance, exercised from whatever considerations it may proceed, is favourable to the peace and good order of society. But if it arise not from love, or evangelical benevolence, and from a religious regard to the golden rule of doing to others as, in a change of circumstances, we would that they should do unto us, it does not afford the man who exercises it a particle of evidence that he is a subject of divine grace. They who deny themselves the malignant

pleasure of avenging an injury, merely through fear of incurring further injury in person, property, or reputation, and without any regard to the authority of God, or the law of kindness, which requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves, can have no claim to the Christian character on that account. The disciples of Christ are required to "forbear one another in love." The forbearance which the politic men of the world exercise, is but a negative quality; that which the Christian is commanded to cultivate, is positive goodness. When offences arise between brethren of the Christian community, they are not allowed by their blessed Master to indulge an unkind feeling of coolness, or indifference, towards one another; but are expressly required to seek reconciliation, to make and accept concessions, and love one another with a pure heart fervently. Nor let this be regarded as mere theory: it is gospel principle; and it has often been acted out, to the praise of gospel grace. In thousands of instances have personal animosities been buried at the foot of the cross; contending parties reconciled; and strifes terminated under the benign influence of the law of love.

"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Here is a piece of inspired counsel worthy of an apostle, and claiming the deepest consideration of all who profess to belong to the household of faith. It may be applied to the whole Church of God, or to any particular portion of the Christian family. In both respects, the due observance of this maxim is of immense consequence to the honour and prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom. By "the unity of the Spirit," I understand not, indeed, an exact agreement in views and sentiments on all religious subjects, which, in the present state of human nature, is not perhaps to be looked for in any society, but a unity of heart and

affection, in regard to the substance, the radical doctrines, and commanded duties of Christianity. This is called the unity of the Spirit, because it is produced in the minds of all true believers by the influence of the divine Spirit, disposing them to embrace the truth, and act agreeably to its dictates. "In the bond of peace." By a beautiful metaphor, a pacific and benevolent disposition is represented as a bond or bandage, binding the hearts and affections of Christians together, so that the whole body ecclesiastic, not only the members of a particular church, but the great family of Christendom, shall co-operate for the glory of God and the good of mankind, as if actuated by one soul, and aiming at the same great and glorious end. What prodigious effects might be produced by this "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," were it cherished, felt, and acted out, by Christians in their attempts to propagate the gospel! What troops of missionaries might be reared and sent forth to Pagan lands with the tidings of salvation! How soon the earth might be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, and the wilderness converted into a field, rich in the fruits of righteousness and love! O, come the blissful day, when the watchmen shall see eye to eye, when those little lines of distinction which have too long separated the friends of Christ, and divided their efforts for the advancement of his kingdom, shall be taken away; and when all who love our Lord Jesus, both theirs and ours, shall be perfectly joined together, and be of one heart and one mind!

It ought to be remembered, too, that in every congregation associated in the name of Christ, this principle of *substantial unity*, with a peaceful toleration of a circumstantial diversity of opinion, is highly favourable, if not absolutely necessary, to the success of the gospel. Spiritual edification cannot

be promoted in the midst of strife, jealousy, and evil surmisings. LOVE IS RELIGION'S FIRST LAW. Peace, based on truth, her motto. "Let all your things be done with charity," (1 Cor. xvi. 14,) is a charming maxim.

The considerations by which the apostle enforces the duties we have just been contemplating, are weighty and impressive in a high degree.

"There is one body." The Church is one great family. Its members, therefore, should act in harmony. There should be no schisms, no contention for pre-eminence. Each should esteem others better than himself; and be careful to fulfil the duties of his station, labouring to promote the good of the whole. In this community, "no man liveth unto himself." And the larger the family, the more need there is of sympathy, meekness, and charitable forbearance.

"And one spirit." All are renewed, inhabited, sanctified, taught, and guided by the same gracious Spirit, the Comforter. All are under the most solemn obligations to mind the things of the Spirit; to follow his dictates; to resign themselves to his influence; and bear his fruits—peace, joy, holiness and love.

"One hope of your calling." All cherish the same hope—a hope of pardon, acceptance, and eternal life; a hope of heaven, and a glorious inheritance with the saints in light.

"One Lord." All profess to belong to Christ, as their common Master; whose precepts bear alike on all his servants, and who has given special command that they who serve him should love one another. This is to be their distinguishing badge; that by which they shall be known to be his disciples.

"One faith." All receive the same system of truth; the same promises, the same ordinances,



and are bound to submit to the same rules of discipline and family order. All, being justified by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ, have peace with God, and must, therefore, be kindly affectioned towards one another, "in honour preferring one another."

"One baptism." One initiatory rite, by which all have been devoted to the service and glory of the adorable Godhead. Baptism is a symbolical cleansing with water, in which the outward and visible sign denotes an inward, invisible, and spiritual grace. It were idle, therefore, to deny the divine appointment and utility of water baptism. The application of water, is the very thing signified by the word baptism. And after all the controversy that has been had respecting the mode, and the subjects of this ordinance, it is one, and but one. When administered by a minister of the gospel, and in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, whether by sprinkling, effusion, or immersion, it is the "one baptism," given to the Church of God, and to be used by the Church as a seal or token of that covenant, which is ordered in all things, and sure as the throne of heaven.

Every Christian church should have a substantial agreement as to the fundamental and essential doctrines of the gospel; and the discipline which it is incumbent on us to maintain in the house, or visible kingdom of God. Without this, a harmonious and efficient influence cannot be brought to bear on the interests of evangelical truth and holiness. The supremacy of Jesus Christ; his eternal power and Godhead; the infinite sufficiency of his atonement; the adequateness of his perfect and imputable righteousness to the justification of all believers; the prevalency of his intercession; the obligatory bearing of his precepts, ordinances, and example upon his professed disciples; the total de-

pravity of human nature; the indispensable necessity of the Holy Spirit's agency in renewing and sanctifying the soul; the immutability of the divine purpose in relation to the redemption and glorification of the Church; God's just claim to the undivided honour and glory of man's salvation; the eternal duration of the rewards and punishments to be assigned at the final judgment, are points we suppose not to be called in question, at least not to be openly impugned by any one who occupies the place, and enjoys the privileges of a church member. So in regard to ecclesiastical polity: consistency and moral honesty require us, while we choose to remain ostensibly a Presbyterian Church, to evince in practice, that we hold Presbyterianism to be the best, i. e. nearest the scriptural model, if not the very *jure divino* form of church government. But, then, there are minute points, both of doctrine and usage, about which some diversity of opinion and practice must be tolerated, or the Church of God will be riven into divisions and subdivisions without end. Concerning many matters of this sort, as they are not, to our dull apprehension, clearly developed and unequivocally decided in our statute-book, the Bible, we must "forbear one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Here is scope for that lowliness, meekness, and long suffering, so feelingly and forcibly urged in our text; and, for the exercise of that charity which is the bond of perfectness. Let not our confidence and fraternal feelings towards one another be impaired by differences of judgment on subjects not affecting the glory of our blessed Master, or touching the vitals of our holy religion; and thus may we not hope to realize "how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity?"

## LECTURE XVI.

## ASCENSION GIFTS.

EPHESIANS, IV. 7—13.—But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

IN the works of God there is a beautiful and almost endless variety. The face of the earth is richly diversified by land and water, continents and seas, islands and lakes, capes and bays, mountains and valleys, rivers and streamlets of all imaginable forms and sizes. In the visible heavens we see the greater light ruling the day, and the less relieving us, at pleasant intervals, from the darkness of the night, and the stars also differing from one another in magnitude and splendour. In the seasons of the year, we have spring, summer, autumn and winter, with their minor changes of heat and cold, rain and sunshine. In the fruits of the earth, what a bounteous profusion of food and fragrance for the nutriment and comfort of its living inhabitants! And, in the great family of mankind, who that considers the subject, is not struck to admiration with the indefinable diversity observable in their persons, complexions, features, tastes, pursuits, and intellectual endowments!

This variety is not accidental. It is the effect of infinite design; and while it is suited to the nature

of man, and well adapted to promote the happiness of sensitive creatures, it affords an admirable display of the wisdom and benevolence of the Creator. A like variety is exhibited in the dispensations of grace. Christians are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ—are all redeemed, called, renewed, and destined to eternal glory; but they are not all equal in the extent of their knowledge, the strength of their faith, the comforts of hope, and other religious attainments. The child of grace, like that of nature, has its infancy, its youth, and manhood; and in its progress it is exposed to many checks and hinderances to its spiritual growth. No one can, therefore, expect to be always alike comfortable in his religious enjoyments. Few, if any, are favoured with a uniform assurance of faith. Most pious persons, I believe, experience less or more seasons of darkness, when they are obliged to trust in a covenant-keeping God, without much of the sensible pleasures of religion. No one, however, who is really a subject of redeeming grace, will rest easy and contented in this comfortless state. He will give all diligence to make his calling and election sure. His constant and fervent prayer will be: "Hide not thy face from me; heal my backslidings, and restore to my soul the joys of thy salvation!" Christians, moreover, are not all furnished with the same capacities, talents, and opportunities for religious improvement. Nor is it necessary that they should be exactly equal in these respects. They all, indeed, receive like precious faith; but as they are to fill various stations, and perform different services in the Church, their faith and other graces differ in degree. This is analogous to what we see in families and other communities. All children of the same parents are not equal in their personal qualities; yet they generally share alike in parental

affection and kindness. The members of this commonwealth are by no means equal, either in their stations, possessions, or mental endowments; yet all have equal rights, and enjoy privileges in a just and wise proportion.

That the same thing exists in the family of the pious, affords no just ground, either of complaint against God, or of envy towards one another. It exists according to the good pleasure of Christ, the glorious head of the family and the source of all gracious influences. He, as Master of the household, provides for its wants, furnishes every member for the duties of his place, teaches all to love one another, to bear one another's burdens, to be content with such things as they have, and rely on the promise which says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." If one possesses more, or has made greater progress in the divine life than another, the rising of self-gratulation, or a feeling of superiority to his fellow members of the Christian community, is suppressed by the reiterated question, "Who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou, that thou hast not received?" All are debtors to Christ, all should therefore be humble, contented, and thankful, maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and dwelling together as heirs of the grace of life, that their prayers may not be hindered. Such I take to be the sense of the first verse of our text: "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

The apostle next notices the ascension of Christ, as an encouragement to believers to confide in him for grace and strength to fulfil the duties and secure the end of their high calling: "Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." These words are a quotation from the sixty-eighth Psalm, eighteenth

verse. The latter clause, which the apostle does not cite, reads thus: "Yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." The immediate design of this Psalm appears to have been to celebrate the removal of the ark of the covenant to Mount Sion, where it was placed first in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple. But that the words just cited are applicable to the Redeemer, the use which Paul makes of them is evidence sufficient. Bishop Horne, in his commentary on the book of Psalms, after expounding the verse in its primary import, concludes his remarks upon it in these words: "But this whole transaction, (i. e. the removal of the ark,) like many others of old, being a figurative one, the apostle, Eph. iv. 8, has applied the words before us to our blessed Saviour, the true ark on which the glory rested, who personally ascended up to the highest heavens, 'led captivity captive' by triumphing over his conquered enemies; and having received gifts from his heavenly Father, as the fruits of his victory, gave them unto men as was most conducive to the establishment of his Church, 'that the Lord God might dwell among them.'" How should it confirm our faith in the glorious Saviour, to find his victory and ascension made the subject of type and prophecy many hundreds of years before his appearance in the flesh! Know, assuredly, that his mediation has been accepted; that the sacrifice of his blood is available to the forgiveness of sins; that he has been received back again amid the acclamations of angels to that glory which he had with the Father before the world was; that he, as the great High Priest of our profession, has entered heaven in the name of his Church, and that there, from his high and holy place, he guards her interests, supplies her wants, and builds her up in truth and holiness, that she may be for ever "a habitation of God,

through the Spirit.” Trust in him, believer; he is the Lord thy Redeemer; and in him is everlasting strength, unsearchable riches, inexhaustible grace, and perennial springs of consolation.

The next two verses are included in a parenthesis, and seem intended to remind us that He, who is now exalted far above all visible heavens, is the same person that condescended to be born of the virgin; to suffer, obey, and die, and go down into the bosom of the earth, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. “Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.” His amazing condescension is here contrasted with his triumphant return to the bosom of the Father; and the great end of both is, “that he may fill all things:” that is, that he may supply all the wants of his Church here on earth, furnish her with all officers, ordinances, and sanctifying influences needful to her enlargement, order and purity; that in due time she may be completely redeemed in all her members, and be prepared to enter into the joy of her Lord.

In the expression, “led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men,” used in the eighth verse, there seems to be an allusion to a military triumph, in which the conqueror, with the captives in his train, was accustomed to scatter largesses, or donatives, from his chariot, among the people who hailed and welcomed him on his entrance into cities, or places of note. And here follows, (verse 11th) a list of some of Christ’s royal donations, or ascension gifts: “And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.” Apostle, is a name of office, given to one who is sent forth publicly on any important business, or to proclaim any important tidings. It is

now applied almost exclusively to those men whom Christ chose and qualified in a special manner, to organize the Christian Church, to complete the canon of sacred Scripture, and commence the ministry of reconciliation. Before his crucifixion he selected twelve, who were his constant attendants, except for a short time when, by his order, they went forth in pairs to preach repentance and the near approach of the kingdom of heaven, or Christian dispensation. Their names are given in the tenth chapter of Matthew. They did not receive their commission till after our Lord's resurrection, and a few days before his ascension; nor did they enter fully on the duties of their office, for they were not qualified fully till the day of Pentecost, ten days after their Master's ascension. Then, and not till then, did the Christian dispensation commence. To substantiate a man's claim to the apostolic office, he must have seen Christ after his resurrection; must exhibit evidence of having been commissioned by him to preach and found churches; must be able to speak various languages without having learned them in the ordinary way; be able to work miracles, and communicate that power to others by imposition of hands. Paul, though called to the apostleship some time after our Lord's ascension, had all these qualifications. He saw Jesus when on his way to Damascus; and his other credentials he exhibited on various occasions. And if these qualifications were requisite to constitute an apostle, as appears from several passages of Scripture, 1 Cor. ix. 1, 2; 2 Cor. xii. 2, it is plain that the apostles, in regard to the distinctive characteristics of their office, have no successors. Ministers of the gospel, for the edifying of the body of Christ, there are, and will be till the end of the world; but apostles, properly so called, there are none. Infallible teachers and miraculous powers ceased with



the termination of the period and the removal of the circumstances which rendered them necessary in the judgment of the Redeemer.

“And some prophets:”—The prophetic office consists in two things: first, and mainly, the predicting of future events under divine inspiration; and secondly, teaching the people by delivering to them the messages of God, and by expounding the Scriptures. In the former particular, their office was peculiar to themselves; in the latter, it was common to them and the priests and doctors of the law under the Jewish dispensation. That both parts of the office were exercised in the apostolic age appears from sundry passages of the New Testament; but whether by a distinct order of men, does not appear so clearly. Paul was a prophet as well as an apostle. But those, in general, who conducted the exercises in religious meetings are often called prophets, as we learn from 1 Cor. xiv. And it seems probable that some were employed in this service who did not exercise fully the functions of either apostle, evangelist, or pastor; yet the office of a prophet is, in part, comprised in that of a gospel minister; as it is an important branch of his duty to teach the people, and announce to them the messages of Jehovah, communicated in the Holy Scriptures.

“And some evangelists:”—The word evangelist, signifies a bearer of good tidings. Hence it is applied to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the four sacred writers who have given us a history of our Lord's life, death, and resurrection, with the glorious things that he did, said, and suffered for our salvation; the best tidings that ever were published in the present world. But the name was also given to those who, under the direction of the apostles, preached the gospel from place to place, watering the churches planted by the apostles, but not con-

tinuing long in any one place. Such were Timothy, Titus, Philip, Apollos, and others.

The substance of this office is continued in the Church in the character of the missionary; a character by no means appreciated, even by Christians, as it ought to be; for it is undoubtedly of divine appointment. The Redeemer himself was, in a qualified sense, a missionary; and so were his apostles. Most that has been done in evangelizing the pagan world has been effected by the agency of missionaries. Let them not be neglected or despised. Let not Christians forget to pray for them, or be backward to contribute to their education and support. The present state of the world calls for the labours of at least thirty thousand more than are now engaged in the work; and Christendom is abundantly able to furnish them. All that is wanting is a strong sense of duty on the subject, connected with a systematic and catholic co-operation. The mean sum of five dollars a year from every professor of the Christian religion, would, under a divine blessing, bring forward the requisite number in the course of a few years. What a change might thus be produced on the moral and religious aspect of this earth! I am decisively of opinion that had we a suitable number of evangelists, men of talents and zeal, constantly engaged in visiting and preaching, not only to vacant congregations, but also to those that have stated pastors, the salutary effects would soon be experienced by both pastors and people. A few such evangelists as the Rev. George Whitefield would be an inestimable blessing to our churches. May we not hope that this desideratum will soon be, in part, supplied by means of our Theological Seminaries and Education Societies? In former times, "when the Lord gave the word, great was the company of those that published it." Ps. lxxviii. 11. Yea, and it will be

so again; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. The Sun of Righteousness, rising above the mountains, shall pour his gladdening influence into every region of our dark and miserable world.

“And some pastors and teachers:”—The meaning of these terms is too well understood to need much explanation. They are probably both intended to mark the same office, the latter expressing literally what the former does figuratively. Had they been used to denote different offices, the word *some*, I suppose, would have been placed between them, as it is between apostles and prophets, and prophets and evangelists. Pastor is synonymous with shepherd, and signifies one whose business it is to feed others; and though all teachers are not pastors, yet every pastor is a teacher. And as the spiritual pastor is to feed his flock with truth, or in Scripture phraseology “with knowledge and understanding,” *teacher* expresses an important part, though not the whole of his duty. Besides teaching, the pastor is bound to guard his flock against the intruding wolf, to maintain discipline, to administer the sacramental provisions of the chief Shepherd, to cherish the lambs, to reclaim the wanderer, to sympathize with the sick, and comfort the dying. The pastoral office, therefore, includes that of teacher; and is the same as that of a settled minister of the gospel. This office is continued, and is to be perpetuated in the Christian Church. Let it ever be regarded as one of the Saviour’s ascension gifts.

The great end and design of these several offices and officers is specified in the next verse: “For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” First, “For the perfecting of the saints for the ministerial work.” That is, apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers are to train, to prove, and ordain other saints

or pious men to the work of the Christian ministry, that there never may be wanting labourers for the gospel harvest. And this, by the way, shows the necessity of a regular induction into the ministerial office. "No man taketh this honour to himself." That is, no man has a right to do so. There is an instituted door of entrance; and he who climbs over the wall is an intruder, and is characterized by Christ in strong terms of disapprobation. "The work of the ministry:"—Let this be well noted by those who may be preparing for it—well remembered by those who enjoy its benefits. It is a work—not a sinecure—a work of so much magnitude and responsibility, that no serious and humble man would dare to undertake it, were it not for the good word of promise: "Lo, I am with you always; even to the end of the world: Amen." But, secondly, the main design is, "that the body of Christ may be edified." The body of Christ is the Church. How intimate the relation between the head and the body! To edify this body is to favour its growth by the application of the instituted means of health and nourishment; or, to drop the figure, the interests and enlargement of the Church are to be promoted by preaching repentance towards God, and the remission of sins through our Lord Jesus Christ; by urging sinners to accept of the Saviour, and by administering consolation and encouragement to the pious. And this work of edification is to be continued till the present scene shall give place to the new heavens and the new earth; till the gracious designs of redeeming love shall be completely accomplished: "Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:" To whom be glory, in the Church, "as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be; world without end: Amen!"

## LECTURE XVII.

## CHRISTIAN STABILITY.

EPHESIANS, IV. 14—16.—That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive: but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

A SUSCEPTIBILITY of religious impressions forms a broad line of distinction between man and every other inhabitant of this world. And in this his superiority to other animals is clearly discernible. By this he is allied to angels and assimilated to God, the source and model of perfect excellence. That supreme love of religion with which we were originally endowed, has been lost by our apostasy; but the capacity or capability of being renewed in righteousness and holiness, after the image of Him that created us, still remains. The constituent faculties of the human mind are the same now as they were in a state of innocent rectitude, though darkness, imbecility, and disorder pervade the whole man. We are alienated from God, obnoxious to his displeasure, and liable to perish eternally; yet, retaining our distinctive characteristics in the scale of being, we can neither be truly happy nor extensively useful in the kingdom of Jehovah while our social affections and moral powers continue in a state of perversion from their original destination. The correctness of this remark is, I believe, felt and acknowledged by all who have paid any serious attention to the subject. Hence it is that most, if not all persons who have attained

to the age of mature judgment and sober reflection, feel at times some degree of anxiety concerning their duty to the Creator, and the way in which his favour may be secured. There is a monitor in every bosom that intimates to man a future state, a solemn responsibility for his present conduct, an eternity of weal or woe. The voice of this inward monitor is often disregarded in seasons of external prosperity, while men are encumbered with the affairs of this life; but in adversity, and especially in sickness, when we are compelled to think of our removal into the world of spirits, conscience obtains a hearing; then religious truth, a religious character, and a good hope of heaven and happiness present themselves to our minds as matters of immense moment. Yes, when we come to lie on the bed of death, we shall find it to be of the utmost importance to have our "hearts fixed, trusting in God." Most cordially, then, should we welcome the gospel of Christ which brings life and immortality to light; which shows us the way to the Father; disperses the gloom of the grave, and removes the sting of death; which proclaims a Redeemer mighty to save, and sets before us a good hope through grace! And let it not be deemed a thing impossible to obtain a settled, firm, and comfortable hope in the mercy and favour of our heavenly Father. He who made us has seen with pity the desolation which we have brought upon ourselves by rebelling against him. Nor has he pitied us merely: his arm has brought salvation, and this salvation his Spirit applies with redeeming power to all who submit to his authority and fly to the arms of his love. God addresses himself to mankind through the medium of his written word, that word which is able, through faith in the Saviour whom it reveals, to make us truly wise; to build us up and give us an inheritance among them

that are sanctified. At no period since the fall of man has the world been destitute of witnesses to testify that "there is forgiveness with God," and that he may be feared and trusted with an unwavering faith and a confident hope. Even before the flood, when the wickedness of man became speedily insufferable in the judgment of heaven, we find Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, distinguished by the tokens of divine favour which they received. And afterwards we read of Job, who, knowing that his Redeemer lived, eschewed evil and triumphed in the hope of glory; of Abraham who believed God and rejoiced in his distant view of the promised seed, in whom the nations were to be blessed; of David who knew that God would guide him by his counsel, and afterwards receive him to glory; of Daniel who worshipped the true God in defiance of the lion's den and the fiery furnace. But, not to mention others among those who lived in the early twilight of the Sun of Righteousness, does not the Saviour himself assure us that "He came a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in him might not abide in darkness?" Does he not say, that his disciples shall know the truth, and that the truth shall make them free? Did he not, before his ascension to glory, bequeath to his people a peace which passeth understanding, and charge them not to let their hearts be troubled, but to consider themselves interested in his victory over the world and the terrors of death? Do not these sayings of Christ plainly show that he intended his people's faith should rest on a solid foundation; that their minds should be made up on the subject of religion; that their hearts should be fixed on the unchangeable God, and that they should entertain a hope which neither the vicissitudes of life nor the fears of death can greatly disturb? This doctrine is abundantly taught also by the apostle Paul. For

himself he declares, "I know whom I have believed; and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." He exhorts Christians to examine and prove themselves whether they be in the faith, which evidently supposes it possible and desirable to obtain a satisfactory measure of evidence of our interest in redeeming love. And in the passage of Scripture now before us, he represents stability in the faith of the gospel as one great end and design of the Christian revelation, and of the inestimable blessings which Christ has bestowed on his Church: "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

As children are easily influenced, and liable to be led astray by the example or bad advice of the wicked, so persons ignorant of, or uninfluenced by the truth as it is in Jesus, are in danger at all periods of life, of yielding a ready assent to any new or curious doctrine that may happen to be fashionable; especially if it seem to favour their sins, and accord with the evil propensities of the human heart. And this danger is rendered the greater by the zeal and industry of men who exert their ingenuity to invent some scheme of religion which will give greater latitude to sinful passions, and require less self-denial than that which is revealed in the Bible. Men of this stamp abounded in the age of the apostles; and under various modifications, their successors, in large numbers, have come down to our own times. They are, in general, men of very plausible pretensions, uniting in many instances, what are commonly called admirable qualities with something of what Paul denominates "cunning craftiness." The methods which they take to effect their designs are diversified, so as to suit the differ-



ent classes into which mankind are divided. They are remarkable for their theological refinements, and novel criticisms on the sacred Scripture, from which they not unfrequently take the liberty of expunging such passages as make against their hypothesis. They would have a religion quite rational, entirely free from mystery, tolerant to the pleasures of sense, and very moderate in its claims upon the hearts and active exertions of mankind. They are fond of complimenting human nature, see no necessity for a divine influence to change the heart, nor of an infinite atonement for the remission of sin. They make strong professions of candour, give no quarters to bigotry; and their charity is so enlarged as to extend alike to the opinions and the persons of mankind. But this is another gospel than that which Christ and his apostles preached. And however it may flatter the pride and suit the taste of sinners, it is far from being adapted to their miserable circumstances. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit; after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Col. ii. 8. Let us embrace with a firm faith the gospel of the New Testament. Here we have a statement of facts corroborated by the experience of ages; and a system of doctrines which approves itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Here, too, we have a plan of redemption disclosed which, with all its mysteries, is worthy of God, and provides an effectual remedy for the deep and dreadful malady of our nature. Receive the account which this gospel gives of the corruption of your hearts. It teaches you that you have ruined yourselves; that you are by nature dead in trespasses and in sins; without strength, and without a disposition to return to your duty till you receive it from God. This information, though humbling, is salutary; and careful self-ex-

amination will convince you of its truth. Receive the Lord Jesus Christ, whom this gospel sets forth as the propitiation for your sins. You have redemption through his blood; and his righteousness is unto and upon all them that believe. "He that believeth shall be saved." This is the divine testimony; and it constitutes your warrant to lay hold on eternal life in Christ Jesus. And while you rely on the Redeemer alone for salvation, make the precepts of his gospel the law of your duty, and attend diligently on all his ordinances as the instituted means of your growth in grace and holiness; "continuing instant in prayer, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Thus may you hope to attain "to the stature of a perfect man in Christ, and be no more children, tossed to and fro, and driven about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." In the faith of those doctrines thousands of our race have obtained peace with God, and have been enabled to meet death in the joyous and certain expectation of a blessed immortality. The same hope is set before you, reader. Lay hold of it, not doubting that you shall find mercy; and that an abundant entrance shall be administered to you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The next verse reminds us that the spirit of Christianity is a spirit of kindness; that Christ is not only the model of moral excellence, but the fountain-head and source of all divine and sanctifying influence. "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." Truth here means, I suppose, doctrine, gospel doctrine, in opposition to false notions on the subject of religion. This truth the ministers of Christ are especially bound to preach and maintain on all occasions and at all hazards. It is to be

published in its due connection, naked majesty, and divine simplicity. Error, when adorned with the beauties of language, may gratify the taste; but truth, and truth only, can profit the souls of men. And as the truth of the gospel exhibits the love of God in providing a Saviour and proffering salvation to the chief of sinners, so it should be preached in a faithful, affectionate, and earnest manner, flowing from a heart of kindness and compassion, resembling that of the Saviour, who, while we were yet sinners, died for us. Private Christians are also to speak the truth in love. And in order to this, they must be acquainted with it; at least in its leading and essential principles. It must furnish the matter for their secret meditation, as well as the topic of their frequent conference with one another. They are to profess the truth, to receive its promises, obey its precepts, and fear its threatenings. They are likewise to defend the truth; but in holding fast their profession, and in contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, they are not to sacrifice meekness and charity to the desire of victory. Religious controversy is sometimes necessary; but love is always necessary. We should be "prepared to give a reason of the hope that is in us to every one that asketh us, with meekness and fear." Christians may and ought to be united in heart and affection, even when they cannot see exactly eye to eye on minor points. We may give a decided preference to our own form of sound words, and to our own system of ecclesiastical polity; but no man is perfect in this life; no creed is altogether faultless; mutual forbearance is, therefore, to be exercised, and charity to be indulged among Christian denominations as well as individuals. "Nothing is to be done through strife or vain glory." Thus holding, speaking, professing and maintaining the truth in love, we grow more and more into the

similitude of Christ, our glorious exemplar and divine Head, from whose communicative fulness we receive grace to be faithful, and strength to persevere unto the end.

In the next verse our dependence on Christ is expressed in terms still more full and forcible: "From whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." There is plainly an allusion here to the science of anatomy. "As the human body is formed by the union of all the members to each other under the head and by the fitness of each member for its own office and place in the body, so the Church is formed by the union of its members under Christ, the head: and as the human body increases till it arrives at maturity by the energy of every part in performing its proper function by virtue of its connection with the head, and by the sympathy of every part with the whole; so the body, or Church of Christ, grows to maturity by the proper exercise of the gifts and graces of individuals for the benefit of the whole."\* What pity it is that the visible kingdom of our Redeemer has hitherto borne so faint a resemblance to this divine description of its union and harmony! When will Christians love one another with a pure heart, fervently? Surely "they that are joined to the Lord are one spirit;" why should they not prove to the world that they are of one heart and of one mind? They are members of the same body, and depending on the same head; why should they not sympathize with one another? Why should there be jealousies, and strifes, and schisms in the family of God? These things ought not so to be;

\* See McKnight on Ephesians, in loc.

and the only reason why they do exist is to be found in the fact that believers are sanctified only in part. The day of small things, however, is not to be despised. The different sections of Christendom are gradually approximating one another; by and by all middle walls of partition will be taken away; the shibboleths of party will ere long be forgotten; and then will the whole household of faith be seen dwelling together in amity under the banner of Christ, acknowledged and adored as their all and in all, to the glory of God the Father.



## LECTURE XVIII.

### THE PURITY OF TRUE RELIGION.

EPHESIANS, IV. 17—24.—This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk, not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind; having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.

WHATEVER may be the temper and practice of nominal Christians, Christianity itself is a holy religion. When cordially embraced, it renovates the heart, enlightens the mind, raises the affections from earth to heaven, and changes entirely the moral character, conduct, and prospects of man. The grace which it proclaims is never applied to the injury of truth and righteousness. The subjects of gospel grace are solemnly required to fear God

and keep his commandments; to come out from the world, and be separate from the workers of iniquity: to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them. However they may have lived, in time past, from the moment they give up their names to Christ, they are to walk as he walked, proving themselves to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works. And to put the professed followers of Christ in remembrance of the holy end and design of their high calling, is an important branch of ministerial duty. In doing this, great plainness and solemnity are to be used. Hear how the apostle Paul addressed the Christians of Ephesus: "This I say, therefore, and testify, in the Lord, i. e., in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye, henceforth, walk not as other Gentiles walk." And to you who have professed the Christian religion, I am bound to say and testify, in the same name and by the same authority, that you are not permitted by the religion which you profess to live and act as do other people, who acknowledge no subjection to Christ, nor any regard for his cause and kingdom. You stand in a peculiar relation to God; you have entered into covenant with him; you have given yourselves up to him, and publicly engaged to serve him in newness of life. You are not your own. One is your Master, even Christ; and he has a right, by creation and redemption, to claim your whole service, your whole influence, your whole hearts. You indulge high and heavenly hopes, and are under eternal obligations to your Redeemer. You have the promise of grace and glory; you enjoy singular privileges; and, to be consistent, you must be singularly devoted to God. Let none imagine that strict piety and non-conformity to the world are not as necessary now, as they were in the days of the apostles. The laws of our holy religion

are immutable—the precepts of Christ are always and every where alike, obligatory on Christians. The plan of redeeming mercy is one and the same throughout all ages, and among all people. It is not altered to suit the fashion of the times, or the usages of the multitude. If a majority of your neighbours and acquaintance neglect God, and the ordinances of his appointment, that is no good reason why you should do so. If your neighbours are living without God in the world, they stand in the more need of the light and influence of your pious example. If they occasionally interrupt you in family worship, and observe you going regularly on the Sabbath to the house of God, they must conclude that, in your judgment religion is a serious, and an every-day-concern; and, while they observe your godly deportment, conviction may through a divine blessing, fasten upon their consciences and awaken them to a sense of duty. But be this as it may, religion is a personal concern. Every one, in this matter, must bear his own burden, and give an account of himself at last to the Creator and Judge of the world. If nine-tenths, or ninety-nine hundredths of mankind should turn atheists, it would still be your duty, and ought to be regarded as your honour and privilege to fear God and keep his commandments. Should scoffers increase, and unsound professors of the gospel apostatize, to any conceivable amount, it would be your bounden duty, nevertheless, to acknowledge Christ before men, to devote yourselves and your children to the Triune Jehovah in the sacrament of baptism, and to commemorate your Saviour's love in the stated and reverential use of the sacramental symbols of his body broken, and his blood shed for the remission of sins. That is a false and mischievous maxim, which teaches us that "we must do as other people do." We have a more sure, a more uniform, a

more authoritative rule of faith and practice. The Bible comprises the statutes and ordinances of that kingdom to which we profess to belong. 'Through the medium of this blessed volume we receive the command of the eternal Father, "Be ye holy; for I am holy"—and the declaration of the gracious Redeemer, "I am the way"—and the still small voice of the unerring Spirit, "'This is the way, walk ye in it." No, Christians, you are not to walk as do others. Your way is marked distinctly by the precepts and example of Christ. And though it be a narrow, afflicted, and unfrequented way, yet it is safe, and free, and pleasant. It has been travelled by those of whom the world was not worthy. Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises.

But what was there in the walk of those other Gentiles which made it necessary for the Christian converts to come out from among them and be separate? In the language of Scripture, men's walk is often used to denote their spirit and conduct, their principles and habits, from which an estimate is to be formed of their general character. The state of the unchristianized Gentiles of whom the apostle speaks, appears from the few short hints which he has furnished concerning them, to have been, in a religious point of view, deplorably miserable and abandoned. Yet it is a faithful picture of the condition of ungodly men in all ages of the world, except in Christian countries where the gospel exerts a restraining influence on the vicious propensities of mankind, and contributes somewhat to elevate the tone of public manners. Let us for a moment contemplate this picture of paganism, and learn from it to be thankful for our religious privileges, and to commiserate the case of those who are still sitting in the region and shadow of moral death.



The first prominent feature is "vanity of mind," or foolishness of mind—want of that wisdom that is from above. Hence their low conceptions of God, their senseless idolatry, their passionate fondness for fables, plays, and sports, and their gross perversion of the most obvious principles of morality and religion. "Having the understanding darkened," they had but slender and inadequate means of knowledge; and even those means they did not improve as they ought to have done. Their sinful habits grew inveterate. Indulging in vain imaginations, leaning to their own understandings, their views of God and duty became more and more confused, till darkness, gross darkness, covered their minds; and thus they were prepared for every evil work, and vicious, sensual gratification. "Being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Their ignorance was owing in a great measure to the state of their hearts. This was the seat of their moral malady. God never left even the heathen without evidences of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness. "The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth his handy-work." But that inborn depravity of heart, common to all mankind, indisposed them to retain God in their thoughts, or to regard with suitable reverence the operations of his hand. Hence their alienation from the life of God, because of the blindness or callous ingratitude of their heart." They were strangers to that spiritual life, that delightful communion and fellowship with the Great Father of spirits to which believers are admitted through the mediation of Jesus Christ. And in those referred to by the apostle, this alienation of the heart from the divine source of life and bliss, increased till it terminated in an utter abandonment of them-

selves to vicious practices of the most degrading and infamous kind.

“Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness to work all uncleanness with greediness.” These words describe a degree of atrocious wickedness to which, one would gladly hope, but few men arrive. Yet we know that sin is of a hardening and progressive nature. Evil men wax worse and worse. Not only Paul the apostle, but several other ancient writers of unimpeachable veracity, give us shocking accounts of the state of morality in the pagan world. Crimes which decency forbids us to name, were perpetrated by the people without a blush, and represented as under the sanction and patronage of their imaginary gods. In many instances, undoubtedly, they fulfilled the lusts of the flesh, sold themselves to lasciviousness, and practised all manner of impurity with an insatiable appetite, without the fear of God before their eyes, without shame, and without any serious apprehension of a judgment to come.

But, as has been already observed, the distressing picture now before us is but too faithful a representation of the character and conduct of the ungodly of our own times. “The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Uninfluenced by the grace of God, and unrestrained by fear of punishment, it is the hot-bed of every foul production that pollutes our moral atmosphere and disturbs the happiness of human life. The carnal mind is enmity against God; and nothing but the grace of the Redeemer can change its character, and rescue it from the dominion of sin. Our own observation supplies us with many affecting instances of persons living in this land of light and gospel privileges, in a state of manifest and awful alienation from the life of God. Walking in the vanity of their minds, bent on sensual indul-

gences, profaning the Sabbath, neglecting the worship, and outraging the authority of their Maker; wasting their time, squandering their property, impairing their health, and besotting their minds in scenes of intemperance and lewdness, they are surely and rapidly filling up the measure of their iniquity, and preparing their souls for the blackness of darkness for ever. They are not only the enemies of God, they are pests of society; corrupt and corrupting others; they are self-destroyers, their god is their belly; they glorify in their shame, they mind earthly things; and, if they turn not, they will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and by the glory of his power.

“But ye,” says Paul to the believers in Ephesus, “have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus.” Nor have you so learned Christ, if you are Christians in deed and in truth. You have learned that Jesus is a holy Saviour; that he came to save you from your sins; that his gospel is altogether a holy religion; that it forbids you to live after the flesh on pain of eternal death; that it claims the empire of your heart, commands you to abound in every good word and work; that it proposes to make you new creatures, to bring you from darkness to light, to redeem you from the bondage of Satan, and make you the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. You have learned that there is in the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ a renewing, transforming, sanctifying, and vital power. You have been taught that it changes, not only your condition, freeing you from condemnation, and giving you, through the Redeemer’s righteousness, a title to eternal glory, but that it also changes your character, making you holy in your degree, even as God is holy.

The substance of what you learn of its influence on your souls is expressed in the following strong and beautiful words of Paul: "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that you must put on the new man, which after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." Let not those who bear the Christian name forget what manner of persons they ought to be in all holy conversation and temper. This entire transformation of character, of spirit and deportment, is the high and holy aim and end of the religion which we profess. The real Christian is a new man in Christ; is renewed in the spirit of his mind; puts off his former conversation, renounces the lusts of the flesh and the pride of his heart; lifts his thoughts and affections to God and heaven, and is clothed in the beautiful garments of righteousness and true holiness. Thus he walks with God, grows in grace, abounds in the works of faith and the labours of love, and aspires to glory, honour and immortality. Come the day when this blessed religion shall pervade all hearts, and yield its genuine fruits to the glory of its divine Author throughout our peopled world!

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## LECTURE XIX.

### TRUTH AND ITS OBLIGATIONS.

EPHESIANS, IV. 25.—Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another.

"TRUTH is an account of the real state of things." Its importance is immense; and our obligation to maintain it, on all subjects, and in all circumstances,

is sacred and indispensable. To speak the truth is to declare things to be, as in our judgment they really are. The apostle's advice on this subject, is generally admitted to be good; and yet, lying, in one way or other, is a very common sin. The essence of a lie consists in intentional deception; and deception may be practised by either words or actions.

The maxims of pagan philosophers are extremely lax on the subject of truth. "A lie," says Menander, "is better than a hurtful truth." "Good is better than truth," says Proclus. "When a lie will profit, let it be used," says Darius. And even Plato, the oracle of Paganism says, "He may lie, who knows how to do it, in a fit season." Maximus Tyrius declares, "There is nothing decorous in truth, but when it is profitable." This is certainly bad morality. It is selfish, sensual, earthly, and devilish. It tends to destroy all distinction between right and wrong—to impair the confidence which we naturally place in the testimony of others, and to produce universal shyness and distrust of our best friends. With these pernicious dogmas the Christians of Ephesus were probably familiar; and they may have been influenced by them while in a heathen state; but, having now embraced the true religion, they were to put away lying, and speak every man truth with his neighbour. In their intercourse with mankind, they are to lay aside all deceptive arts, to use, in their dealings and conversation with one another, such terms as shall most exactly express the real state of facts, and the honest sentiments of their hearts. And this they are to do, not only from a reverential regard to the authority of God, who forbids falsehood under the most awful penalty, but from a principle of benevolence and brotherly kindness: "For we are members, one of another."

The duty enjoined in our text is so plain that

any person of common sense may understand it, and so imperative that no one can neglect it without incurring guilt, and exposing himself to the displeasure of God: "Speak every man truth with his neighbour." Neighbour, as is clearly shown in the parable of the good Samaritan, denotes any and every person with whom we may have dealings, or to whom we may have occasion to perform the offices of kindness and charity. The meaning of the precept then is, that all our declarations, whether spoken or written, be true and accordant with the real state of the matters concerning which we speak or write.

1st. To this duty we are solemnly obliged by the express and repeated command of our Maker. "Thou shalt not bear false witness," is one of the immutable principles of the Decalogue; and to a compliance with this precept we are urged by the most fearful threatenings: "All liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." Rev. xxi. 8. And of heaven it is said, "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie:" (27th.) These passages of Scripture, with many others that might be cited, give us the mind of God respecting those who violate the truth. They are threatened with hell, and absolutely and positively excluded from heaven. Here is no exception made in favour of what are sometimes called harmless, witty, or profitable lies. Let no one deceive himself. The sanctity of truth may not in any case be violated with impunity. God is a God of truth; truth is one of his glorious attributes; and in regard to this and all his imitable perfections, we must be holy as he is holy. The devil is a liar, and is styled in Scripture "the father of lies." By a false declaration made to our first parents he tempted

them to sin, and involved them and their posterity in misery and shame. All liars, therefore, are the enemies of God, the children of the wicked one, and without repentance and reformation they may with fearful certainty expect to go away at the day of judgment into that everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Matt. xxv. 41.

2d. The importance of "speaking every man truth with his neighbour" will be clearly seen if we consider the influence of truth on human society, and on all the comforts of social life. Most of our knowledge is derived from the experience and declarations of others. To the declarations of God we are indebted for most of what we know respecting ourselves, our true character, our sin and ruin by the fall, the way of our recovery through Christ the Redeemer, the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body, and the eternal retributions of the judgment day. Now the certainty of our information on these subjects, as well as the security of our hopes as Christians, depend on the veracity of the Creator. We are sure that our souls are immortal, that our bodies shall be raised from the dust, and that we have redemption through our Lord Jesus Christ, because we know and feel confident that the truth and faithfulness of our God endure for ever. In like manner our knowledge of men and things, of history, of science and the arts, is derived in a great measure from the narrations of the historian, the journalist, and the traveller. If their accounts be true, our information derived from them is correct, and we may calculate upon it with safety; if untrue, and inconsistent with the real state of facts, our reading is worse than vain; it leads us into error, and may subject us to serious and distressing inconvenience. Children get the elements of their knowledge from the conversation and instructions of parents and teachers. How im-

portant, in all these instances, that the truth and nothing but the truth be written, spoken and taught!

3d. Speaking the truth, strictly and uniformly, is necessary as the foundation of confidence which, from the condition of man and the nature of human society, we are obliged to repose in one another in all the transactions, duties and enjoyments of life. Mutual confidence is the bond of society. Under God, we are dependent on our fellow men for most of the necessaries and comforts of the present world. We enter into life helpless, we lean upon the parental hand and cry for nourishment. In childhood we trust our parents and friends as naturally as we breathe. Nor in childhood only. At all periods of life, and in all the diversified circumstances of mankind, they are obliged to trust one another for the truth of statements and the fulfilment of promises. And where confidence cannot be placed in men's veracity, there can be neither safety nor fraternal kindness. In such a state of society every one would shun, hate and fear his neighbour. All commerce would cease, the world would become a scene of cold-hearted selfishness, a den of thieves, another hell. Without confidence all the relations of parent and child, teacher and pupil, pastor and flock, ruler and subject, must become sources of inexpressible anxiety and wretchedness.

Now, it is perfectly evident, that we cannot place confidence in those who frequently deceive us. We are reluctant to trust a person who has failed to fulfil his engagements with us in a single instance, unless he assign good and satisfactory reasons for his failure. In a word, destroy the confidence of mankind in one another, and you dry up the fountains of social happiness; check the efforts of philanthropy, and prepare the way for the entire banishment of public spirit from the face of the earth. That all manner of falsehood has this tendency, is obvious and undeniable.



How tender and forcible, then, the consideration by which Paul urges the duty of speaking every man truth with his neighbour: "For we are members one of another." We are linked together by ties of mutual dependence. As it is in the human body, so it is in the great family of mankind; the good of the whole, and of every one in particular, is best secured by the joint action of all the constituent members. We lean on one another—the poor on the rich, and the rich on the poor; the child on the parent, and, in turn, the parent on the child; the ruler on the subject, and the subject on the ruler; the merchant on the farmer, and the farmer on the merchant; the illiterate on the learned, and the man of science on the day-labourer. Hence, all honest occupations are honourable, because they are useful, not only to those who exercise them, but to the community at large. The pride of profession is the offspring of ignorance. "We are members one of another." Let us, therefore, "speak every man truth with his neighbour." By this means the great business of life will be best promoted, and the welfare of each individual be most effectually secured. The liar forfeits all claim to public confidence, insulates himself from his neighbour, and gradually deprives himself of useful employment and useful influence. A quotation from one of the admirable sermons of the late President Dwight shall close this article of our discourse: "There is one world in the universe, and, so far as we are informed, but one, in which truth is unknown, and falsehood reigns and ravages. Here all liars have their part; and all who dwell here are liars. Here, to deceive, and to be deceived, is the base employment and the wretched lot. Truth here is never spoken, unless to deceive; and confidence is never exercised. Friendship, sociality, the union of hearts, and the interchange of

affections, are never found in this dreary and dreadful region. In the midst of millions, every individual is alone. A gloomy and terrible solitude broods over the desolate vast; and the eye of suffering and sorrow stretching its look of anguish above, around, beneath, finds no friend in whom it may confide; no bosom on which it may repose with comfort, peace, or hope.

“How different is that delightful residence where all who love and speak truth, are, by the boundless goodness of the Creator, united in a divine and blissful assembly. Here truth, by every member of this vast and happy family is loved, studied, embraced, and spoken for ever. Confidence here enters the soul, and takes up in this unsullied mansion its eternal residence. Friendship, the twin sister of confidence, dwells and smiles by her side, and sheds on the purified mind her immortal enjoyments; while God with infinite complacency beholds this illustrious work of his own hands, and showers around it with eternal profusion the ever-growing blessings of his unchangeable love.” (See Ser. CXXV.)

Let us now notice briefly some of the ways in which the truth is violated. That it is violated in a multitude of instances, and by great numbers of people, cannot be denied.

Some persons seem to have little or no sense of the importance of truth. Such people, of course, speak truth or falsehood just as their views of present advantage may direct. Destitute of all moral principle, alienated from God, and unmindful of his presence and omniscience, a convenient or profitable lie with them is always preferred to a painful or unwelcome truth. Characters of this description are dreadful public nuisances. In proportion, however, as they become known, their mischievous influence diminishes. In their immediate neigh-

bourhood, they seldom fail to sink down into utter insignificance and contempt.

Many persons violate the truth through want of care in examining subjects concerning which they speak. In this way statements and declarations are often made which are wholly unfounded. Judgments rashly formed, and reports propagated by idle rumour, are detailed and passed from hand to hand as truths and facts, to the great detriment often of society and the interests of religion. Persons of this description, if they do not feel a contempt for truth, are certainly chargeable with a criminal indifference to its sacred and religious claims to our serious regard.

Promise-breaking is another very common mode of violating truth. How often do we see men fail to fulfil their engagements, not only in small matters, but in the most weighty and important concerns. In this case our neighbour is disappointed and deceived, our reverence for veracity is diminished, God is offended, our conscience polluted, and our credit and peace both seriously impaired.

Multitudes are tempted to lie by the love of gain. Falsehood of this sort is very common among people who are engaged in trade, and who are bent on being rich. The seller often overrates the articles which he offers for sale, or, which is equally inconsistent with truth and honesty, conceals their defects; the buyer, on the other hand, is very apt to depreciate that which he wishes to purchase at an undervalue. In this way deception and falsehood are, in multitudes of instances, extensively and unblushingly practised through love of money.

The time would fail us to point out the numerous ways in which truth is violated, the law of God outraged, and the confidence of man in man impaired by words, and actions, and publications designed to deceive the unwary, and serve foul,

sinister, and selfish ends. Political parties, religious sects, rival associations, and individuals of the same occupation violate truth continually and without scruple in relation to one another, partly from prejudice and ignorance, and partly from jealousy, the love of power, and the pride of victory; and our newspapers, both secular and religious, are to a shameful extent made the vehicles of misrepresentation, falsehood, and personal abuse. Truth, justice, and the law of love are prostrated, the foundations of human society undermined, and all the harmonizing charities of social intercourse sacrificed to the worst passions and designs that disgrace and degrade our nature, when men cease to "speak every man truth with his neighbour." The benevolent and great plans of the Almighty are based on truth; and it is through a knowledge and right use of the truth as it is in Jesus, that we are sanctified and saved by redeeming grace.



## LECTURE XX.

### ANGER, AND ITS RIGHT GOVERNMENT.

EPHESIANS, IV. 26, 27.—Be ye angry and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil.

THE proper government of our passions is of vast importance, whether it be considered as a duty or as a means of securing our own peace and comfort. Anger is a feeling of displeasure and disapprobation usually excited by something said or done, which is in our judgment wrong and injurious either to ourselves or to others for whom we entertain a benevolent regard. The occurrences which call this passion into exercise are frequently, and in the ordinary intercourse of society, unavoidable. It is not necessarily and in all cases a sinful emotion;

but it is often the occasion of sin; and it is clearly our duty to guard against its excessive indulgence, and endeavour to keep it within the bounds of reason and Christian meekness. This appears to be the meaning of the apostle in our text, "Be ye angry and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil."

In farther considering the subject, we will inquire, (1st) what is the proper object of anger; (2d) on what occasions it becomes sinful; and then endeavour to furnish some general rules for its due regulation and restraint.

I. That a certain degree of anger, or as it is sometimes called, holy indignation, is justifiable and consistent with goodness, seems to me undeniable. In the present state of man it is an essential property of the human mind, and has been implanted in us by the Creator for wise and benevolent purposes. Its proper object is sin, or moral evil; any thing and every thing in the speech or behaviour of mankind which is wrong, or contrary to truth and righteousness. Anger is ascribed to the Divine Being himself in the sacred Scriptures; "God is angry with the wicked every day." Whence we may conclude that anger in man, when directed against wickedness, and kept within due bounds, is not incompatible with moral rectitude or evangelical holiness. The same thing is fairly deducible from the language of the text, "Be ye angry, and sin not." I do not understand Paul as commanding us to be angry; yet his expression certainly implies that it is possible to be angry without committing sin. So, also, when our Saviour, (Matt. v. 22,) declares that, "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment," he teaches that there may exist a justifiable cause of anger even towards a brother. Sin is in itself hateful, and in its effects

injurious to the sinner and to the community. It is therefore right to abhor it, and to be, in a sober sense, angry with or grieved at those who practise it. In the 139th Psalm we find the Psalmist expressing his abhorrence of the wicked in very strong terms: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am I not grieved with them that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies:" (21, 22.) David did not hate the persons of men, or wish them evil; yet he was angry with them for their wickedness. And of our Lord it is said, (Mark iii. 5,) that he looked on the Pharisees with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." Thus while we regard the persons of men with kindness, and sincerely wish them well, we may reprove their evil deeds, and be angry with them for their bad conduct. Sin, and sin only, is the object of all those emotions of displeasure which are tolerated by the maxims of Christian morality.

II. We inquire, in the next place, how and in what circumstances anger becomes sinful. And if the foregoing account concerning the proper object of anger be correct, it is obvious that all angry or indignant passions which spring from any other motive than a love of holiness, or a hatred of sin, are to be regarded as of an unwarrantable and criminal character. This remark may appear at first view too strict; but on close and serious examination it will be found, I apprehend, perfectly accordant with Scripture and sound reason. But to be a little more particular:

1. We sin whenever we become angry without sufficient cause. That this is often the case will scarcely be denied by any reasonable and considerate person. Multitudes of people indulge a fretful, peevish, and complaining disposition in regard to circumstances and events of a providential nature,

over which neither they nor their fellow mortals can exert any sort of control. To this evil source may be traced most of the complaints which are uttered continually respecting the unpropitious state of the world, the languor of trade, the low price of articles of commerce which we wish to dispose of, the sterility of the soil, the irregularity or unhealthiness of the season. Such murmurings are not only futile and altogether inefficacious, but they partake largely of ingratitude towards the bounteous Giver of all good. Let those who feel themselves inclined to this species of causeless anger consider, that as sinners we deserve nothing but misery; let them think how many comforts they possess, how great a share of their privations and afflictions are owing to their own sin and folly; let them walk abroad and view the riches of divine munificence with which the earth is loaded for the use of man and beast, and they will see abundant cause for contentment with the allotments of Providence, and for grateful praise to Him whose tender mercies are over all his works, and “who gives us all things richly to enjoy.”

2. People who have occasion to transact business with one another, or to associate for the accomplishment of great and useful objects, are liable to be displeased and angry with each other, without just cause, through want of due allowance for human ignorance, prejudice and frailty. Mankind are all weak, sinful and prone to err; all are, therefore, under obligation to bear and forbear. No man is perfect—none should expect perfection in others. We are formed very much by the circumstances in which we are placed in early life. They who have been well educated and accustomed to various society, will generally entertain enlarged and liberal views; while others, whose instruction has been more limited, and who have had but little opportu-

nity to get acquainted with men and manners, will for the most part be strongly attached to their own habits of thinking and manner of doing business. Now, as societies formed for mutual benefit or public usefulness, whether of a civil or religious kind, are composed of persons possessing various degrees of intellectual improvement and accustomed to diverse occupations and modes of living, it may be expected that some diversity of opinion will arise respecting the way and manner of compassing any proposed and desirable end. We ought not, therefore, to indulge unkind feelings towards those who do not think precisely with us on all subjects. A wise man always respects the opinions of others; and where there is substantial honesty and love of truth, there is sufficient ground for esteem and brotherly kindness. A good man's patience may be somewhat tried by the ignorance and obstinacy of those with whom he has to deal; but nothing short of deliberate wickedness, can call forth his reluctant indignation.

3. Parents in the government of their children, are apt occasionally to be too much under the influence of causeless anger. Children are in many instances perverse, obstinate, refractory and disobedient. This to a parent, concerned as he should be for the welfare of his offspring, is a sore trial. But we should recollect that our children are conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity; that we have been the instruments of conveying to them a depraved nature, which is the fountain head of all their evil propensities, and that we are bound by ties both natural and divine, to use with patience and perseverance all proper means to make them acquainted with their duty; produce in their tender minds, a sense of obligation to fear God and keep his commandments, that they may in due time be brought under the tuition and influence of redeeming grace.



4. Anger is an occasion of sin, when it impels us to say or do things that are unjust or unkind, and of which we shall on mature reflection have reason to repent. This is one of the most common and most dangerous effects of violent anger. The tendency indeed of all anger, which is not tempered by the fear of God, is to rash and mischievous purposes. Promises made and threats uttered under the influence of any strong passion, are seldom or never such as to bear reviewing or admit of being fulfilled with satisfaction to the considerate and upright mind. The judgment cannot perform its functions properly under the influence of passion. It will therefore in general, be both wisest and safest to suspend our decision and decline acting till passion shall subside and reason resume her proper place and authority in the soul.

5. Anger always becomes sinful when it is long indulged. "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry," says Solomon, "for anger resteth in the bosom of fools." Ecc. vii. 9. A good man may be angry, but he will be easily pacified, and ready to forgive injuries, however grievous and unprovoked they may have been. "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath," says Paul in our text. This is a lovely maxim; one to which every gracious heart will readily subscribe. Pythagoras, a famous philosopher of ancient Greece, taught his pupils to observe it in substance: "When they had been angry with one another, he required them to shake hands and embrace each other before sun-set." Such speedy forgiveness and reconciliation were deemed essential to their happiness, as well as intellectual and moral improvement. Much more should the disciples of Christ be ready to forgive one another, if any have a quarrel against any, that they may be prepared to offer the evening sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving, "lifting up to their for-

giving God pure hands without wrath." 1 Tim. ii. 8.

Anger long retained and cherished naturally degenerates into malice and revenge; it corrodes the mind, impairs charity, and paves the way for deeds of violence and blood. It breaks the bonds of brotherhood, and eminently favours the views and designs of Satan, the implacable and eternal adversary of God and man. He who indulges anger, gives place, provides room in his heart for the devil, and furnishes him with materials on which to work with certain and direful success. Thus we have taken a brief view of the maxim before us. We have seen that anger is a passion that belongs to our nature; that the only object against which it should be directed is sin; that it is always criminal and offensive to God when felt and indulged without sufficient cause; when it impels us to say or do things of a rash and unjust nature; and that, when cherished and prolonged beyond the limits of justice and charity, it settles down into the base and ruinous passions of malevolence and revenge, passions which invariably give Satan the advantage over us, as they greatly favour his malicious work of misery and death on the souls of men.

Think not, readers, that this subject is of small importance. If it was of so much moment as to determine the apostle Paul to give it a place in the sacred canon of Scripture, ministers of the gospel are bound to preach it, and you are under solemn obligations to hear it, and endeavour to improve by it. To your own peace and comfort it is of daily importance. Daily you meet with provocations and trials of your patience and meekness; and if not prepared to overcome evil with good, your peace and tranquillity will be in constant jeopardy.

III. As to the best rules for the regulation and

government of anger, let me suggest the following, viz :

1. Be careful never to allow your indignation to arise, or act out against any thing but sin, or manifest violations of the great principles of the moral law. It is not a sufficient reason for anger, that your opinions are called in question, or your views thwarted by those with whom you are associated or have occasion to act. You may be wrong; and when this is the case, you should be thankful to have your error corrected. Concede cheerfully to others what you claim for yourself—freedom of thought, speech and action.

2. Be mindful of the Divine presence, and of your responsibility to God for your emotions and passions, as well as words and actions. God looks at the heart; and we know who has said with authority, that “whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment.”

3. Make due allowance for the frailties and prejudices of your neighbours and associates, and you will be the better prepared to meet their opposition calmly, and the more likely to correct their mistakes without disturbing your own peace of mind. “Charity is not easily provoked.” Let all your things be done with long-suffering and love.”

4. “Remember the pernicious tendency of this passion, when conceived without good reason, and indulged beyond the limits of reason and religion. It makes against peace of mind, stable friendships, and good neighbourhood. It not unfrequently provokes abusive language, and prepares the way for deeds of violence and blood.

## LECTURE XXI.

## STEALING AND FRAUD.

EPHESIANS, IV. 28.—Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

TO STEAL is to take secretly the property of others with a view of applying it to our own use. The value of the property taken does not change the nature of the crime. He who steals a cent, an apple, or a cluster of grapes, is a thief in the eye of law and justice, as well as he who steals millions of dollars.

By common consent of mankind, as well as by the laws of God and nations, every person has a right to the fruit of his own exertions; of course no one is at liberty to encroach upon that right. Hence the pains and penalties denounced in the sacred Scriptures and in the statutes of civilized States against theft of every kind and degree.

Some of the Ephesian converts, it seems, had previously to their Christian profession, been addicted to this evil practice; they are, therefore, solemnly reminded by the apostle that their high and holy calling as disciples of Jesus Christ, so far from tolerating such conduct, requires them to labour, working with their hands the thing that is good, that they may be able from the fruits of their honest earnings to supply the wants of the needy.

It may not be amiss, before we enter on the main subject of discourse, to reflect for a moment on the vast importance of doing justly, of adhering rigidly to the principles of honesty in all matters of commerce and business with mankind. There are many ways in which we may trespass on the property of others, besides direct stealing. "Whatso-

ever doth or may unjustly hinder our neighbour's wealth or outward estate," is virtually a violation of the eighth commandment. Property consists in money, in articles of trade, or in service due from one to another, either by agreement or by natural relationship. Hence it is evident we may be dishonest by a voluntary delinquency in the payment of debts, by concealing the defects of things which we offer for sale, or by withholding either in whole or in part, any service which another has a right to expect from us. In matters of this sort, many persons commit frauds injurious in their effects and heinous in their character, without duly considering the guilt which is connected with such conduct. Those who wish to see this subjected treated in a masterly style, would be edified by a careful perusal of the late Dr. Dwight's excellent discourses on the eighth commandment.

Parents and guardians should spare no pains in training their children and domestics to strict habits of honesty and uprightness. It is not enough that we correct them for the petty thefts which they may commit in the family, or among their playmates: we should converse with them often, improving every occasion that comes to their knowledge of persons being convicted of dishonest practices; warning them of the ruinous consequences of all vice; reminding them of the omniscience, the commands and threatenings of God against the workers of iniquity. We should particularly labour to convince them by reason and a reference to striking passages of Scripture, that they must give an account, in the day of judgment, for all their evil desires and wicked actions, even though they should escape disgrace and punishment in this world. Yes, children, you must render an account at the judgment-seat of Christ, for all your thoughts, words and actions. Consider attentively, therefore,

while I exhort and entreat you to guard against the beginnings of vice. I have somewhere read or heard of a man that was hung for horse-stealing or some other flagitious crime, who began his wicked career by stealing pins and other articles of no great value from his mother and sisters. Behold what mighty conflagrations proceed sometimes from a small spark of fire! Beware of little sins; like a leak in a ship at sea they often terminate in death and ruin. If you steal small sums of money or other things, whatever may be their worth, from your parents, your guardians, your brothers or sisters; if you snatch a peach from a cart in the street, or a fig or a raisin from a box at a store-door; if you pillage a neighbour's field or garden of any of its fruits, remember you not only run the risk of being detected and punished in a distressing and disgraceful manner, but you indulge a covetous and evil disposition, which will gain strength by every gratification with which it is supplied; you put in jeopardy the peace and honour of your kindred; nay more, and most of all to be dreaded, you violate the command of God, who has said in his holy word, "Thou shalt not steal:" you walk in the way of the transgressors, which leads down to the dark and dreary regions where, if you continue in sin, you will be shut up with wicked men and fallen angels for ever and ever. O, then, dear children, shun the company of the wicked; if sinners entice you, consent not; suppress and deny every covetous desire that may arise in your hearts; fly from all dishonest and other vicious practices; "fear God and keep his commandments;" obey the Lord Jesus Christ, and follow his holy example, and you shall be blessed.

"Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that

needeth." The two principal ideas conveyed in this passage of Scripture are: First, that we should all be engaged in some useful occupation. Secondly, that out of the fruits of our industry, which we have a right to enjoy and dispose of, under our responsibility to God, we ought to contribute to the relief of the needy. To illustrate and urge these ideas, will be my aim in what remains of this discourse.

I. We should all be engaged in some useful occupation. "Let every one labour, working with his hands the thing which is good." This maxim must have been of great practical importance to the primitive Christians. Most of them were poor. Many of them, on embracing the gospel were obliged to resign their places of profit, and sacrifice their prospects of worldly gain. Persecution drove them into retirement; denied them the common rights of the State in which they lived; exposed them to hunger and thirst, to obloquy and nakedness, and in many instances to scourging and imprisonment, and amidst this pressure of outward affliction, they spent no small share of their time in religious conference and social worship. To these much loved and delightful exercises, there is good reason to think, they devoted a part of every day. In such circumstances, had they been slothful in business, they could not have procured the means of subsistence. As a temporary expedient, they threw their little property into one common stock, out of which the necessary wants of all who lived within a district of convenient extent, were seasonably supplied. In this situation, had they not laboured with their hands, the thing that was good, their funds must soon have been exhausted. Yet among the various calamities which they endured, we hear no complaints for the want of food, or other necessaries. They seem to have had no beggars among them, probably, because they tolerated no

idlers. After the regulation which established a community of goods was laid aside, we find them both able and willing to contribute to charitable purposes. The widow, the orphan, and such as were in bonds or in prison for the testimony of Jesus, were provided for promptly and with cheerfulness. This ability to perform the offices of charity and kindness, must have been owing to the divine blessing on the effects of their sobriety and industrious habits. We have an account of the occupations of several persons, who were alike distinguished for their piety and their industry. Aquilla and Priscilla were tent-makers. Dorcas of Joppa, was a tailoress; who, besides supporting herself and immediate dependents by her needle, was a blessing to her poor neighbours. To her honour it is related by the sacred historian, (Acts ix. 36,) that "she was full of good works and alms-deeds, which she did." Yes; and the benign influence of her example of generous industry will be felt till the end of the world, through the Dorcas societies now to be found in almost every populous town in Christendom; by whose labours of love many an indigent mother with her half-naked children, are supplied with comfortable garments during the inclement months of winter. Lydia of Thyatira, whose heart the Lord disposed to attend to the preaching of Paul, was a seller of purple. And Paul himself, though an apostle, and who therefore had a right to live by the gospel, earned his bread often by the labour of his own hands, that he might not be burdensome to the infant churches. In more than one of Paul's epistles industry is made the subject of special advice and command. The Roman Christians he exhorts to "provide things honest in the sight of all men." Rom. xii. 17. In his first letter to the Thessalonians (iv. 11, 12), we find these words, "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do



your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing." In these passages it is observable that industry and honesty are connected; by which it seems to be intimated, that an idler is always in danger of becoming dishonest. In 2 Thess. iii. 6, &c., we find a passage still more pointed and solemn: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us: for yourselves know how ye ought to follow us, for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man's bread for naught, but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you; not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us: for even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." In this passage it appears that Paul regarded a professing Christian continuing in voluntary idleness, as disorderly, and as deserving the censure of the church.

Thus we learn, as well from the precepts of the gospel as from the conduct of the primitive Christians, that it is our duty to be employed in some useful occupation. Nor is this a matter of less moment now than in former ages. Man was made for activity, and without it he invariably becomes both useless and wretched. As a maxim of national policy, it may be laid down as indubitable, that "labour is wealth." The substantial and permanent riches of a State are to be found in the products of genius and manual labour. Every other species of national strength is adventitious, fluctuating, and rather nominal than real. The earth

yields to the hand of culture the raw materials of every thing that is most useful, comfortable, and ornamental in human society. Agriculture feeds commerce, while manufacture gives life and vigour to both. These mighty engines of national power, always most efficient when in close alliance, mutually aided and aiding one another, are kept in motion by industry; without this they become unproductive; the body politic languishes; the people become poor, lose their confidence in one another as well as in the government under which they live; and there is an end to social order and general prosperity. Such a state of things is particularly to be deprecated, not only on account of the distress which it brings upon all classes in the community, but because it gives rise to an unusual amount of speculating, gambling, and other evil practices by which the public morals are deeply and extensively corrupted. One of the greatest infelicities felt in our country at the present time is, that we have too many people out of employment. Owing to the depression of business at times, the ordinary pursuits of many well-disposed persons do not afford them the means of subsistence. To those who are in straitened circumstances, this is an embarrassing and distressing case. Could some liberal and well arranged system be introduced by which the poor, who are capable of labour, might obtain constant and moderately lucrative employment, it would not only afford relief to many worthy individuals and families, but contribute largely to check the increase of pauperism and arrest the progress of vice. This is a matter well worthy the serious attention of the Christian, the philanthropist, and the statesman.

Diligent application to business is necessary in most cases to procure an honest livelihood; to preserve us from the influence of temptation; to promote health and contentment; to give a zest to our

domestic and every-day enjoyments; and it is especially necessary to supply us with the means of doing good to our indigent and afflicted fellow men. This remark brings us to the consideration of our second proposition, viz:

II. That out of the fruits of our industry, which we have a right to use and dispose of under our responsibility to God, we ought to contribute to the relief of the needy. In all our exertions to acquire property, one prominent end should be, "that we may have to give to him that needeth." This is one of the laws of Christ's kingdom, and it is never to be forgotten or lightly esteemed by his disciples. The wants of mankind are of two general classes: those which relate to the body, and such as respect the soul. Both are important, but of the two, the latter is by far the more momentous. Of a zeal and readiness to relieve both these sets of wants, our blessed Lord has left us an illustrious and attractive example. His exertions were unwearied; his compassion infinite, and his perseverance unconquerable. His beneficence is embodied and immortalized in few words by the pen of inspiration: "He went about doing good." He was food to the hungry, consolation to the broken-hearted, feet to the lame, ears to the deaf, eyes to the blind, life to the dead! His very soul was made of tenderness. He came to administer the true balm of Gilead to afflicted humanity, and to prove to the universe that he esteemed it "more blessed to give than to receive;" he at last gave his life a ransom for many! But you will say, we cannot afford help to the needy as he did. True, we cannot to the same extent; but let us do what we can: nothing more is required or expected of us. Something we can do. And if we are Christ's we shall resemble him, however faint and imperfect may be the likeness. Two mites, proceeding from a

sympathetic and obedient heart, is no mean offering. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Phil. ii. 5.

The early followers of our Divine Master were not omnipotent; neither were they generally endued with miraculous powers; yet they did much—much more than we do, considering their means. The reason is, they acted not only under a pressing sense of duty, but systematically. They made a contribution to replenish their charity-fund stately every Sabbath. Read on this subject 1 Cor. xvi. "Now, concerning the collection for the saints," says Paul, "as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye: upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." Here is the grand secret in the divine art of doing alms-deeds: "Let every one lay by him in store weekly, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when the occasion comes." If every one were to keep a fund consecrated to religious uses, and put into it stately a certain portion of all he earns or saves, we should never be taken on surprise by a call for a contribution; we should be looking out for suitable objects to which we might apply the sacred treasure with the best prospect of doing good. This, I take to be the meaning of Paul in the scripture just cited; and in this way it was that the primitive Christians were able to do so much for their poor, and for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause. Having the means always on hand, their beneficence was prompt and diffusive. Their charity did not terminate at home, if it began there. It pleased those of Macedonia and Achaia to send relief to the poor saints at Jerusalem. The people's liberality was conveyed from place to place by the hands of the

apostles and other trusty messengers, as providence called and occasion seemed to require. Let us imitate their example, remembering that we are not our own, but are bought with a price; that if, from a heart of love, and a principle of faith in our Lord Jesus, we serve God and our generation with such things as we have, we shall soon be put in possession of all things.

The duty of giving to him that needeth, has pressing claims to our serious regard in the present state of our country and the Church of God. Turn not away from him that is needy. I acknowledge, in regard to the bodily wants of the poor, it is often difficult to distinguish between the deserving and the worthless. Yet if we exercise our judgment, and give from right motives, that which we cast upon the waters shall be gathered after many days. It were better to give to ten unworthy objects than to reject the petition of one deserving child of sorrow. In regard to the exigencies of the Church, or, if you please, men's spiritual necessities, there is comparatively little danger of being deceived. Contribute to the salvation of souls ready to perish through the medium of the various societies and institutions formed among you for the furtherance of the gospel, and managed by your fellow Christians, and you have good reason to hope that your liberality, in its benign influence, will reach the judgment-seat of Christ and the triumphs of heaven. "To do good, and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

## LECTURE XXII.

## THE RIGHT USE OF SPEECH.

EPHESIANS, IV. 29.—Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth; but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

THE faculty of speech is one of the noble endowments by which mankind are distinguished from all the other living inhabitants of this world. Inferior animals have indeed a sort of natural language, by which they express their passions or instincts in a very strong and impressive manner, but it is quite limited in its use, and seems incapable of improvement; whereas articulate language, which is peculiar to man, is susceptible of modifications and refinements almost immeasurable, and may be applied to an infinite variety of benevolent and useful purposes. Yet this inestimable blessing of Providence is liable, under the influence of human depravity, to great abuse. Every serious and well disposed person who walks the streets, or mingles at all in society, must be often shocked at the foul and offensive language with which his ears are assailed. The tongue, designed by the kind Author of all good to be employed by us in celebrating his praises, and in conveying instruction and comfort to one another, is by many, used to utter words at once criminal in their meaning and pernicious in their effects on those who hear them. It is not without good reason, therefore, that the apostle urges us as in the text, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth; but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." The subject now before us is a plain and practical one. By "communication" in this connection is obviously meant the conversa-

tion which we hold with one another in our social intercourse, and in the ordinary transaction of business. This, Paul tells us, should not be corrupt; that is, it should not be of an immoral or irreligious cast and tendency, but such as is calculated to encourage and confirm those sentiments, tempers and habits which go to constitute the Christian character, and thus to promote the spiritual improvement of ourselves and others. In order that we may comply with the advice here given, it seems to me necessary that our conversation should possess the following qualities, viz: it should be serious, reasonable, chaste, charitable, and free from profanity. Let us attend a little to these things; if I mistake not, they are implied in the injunction before us, and have no small influence on a deportment becoming the gospel of Christ. Words are reasonably supposed to indicate the state and temper of the heart; hence, says our Saviour, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Matt. xii. 37. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Matt. xii. 36.

First, then, in order that our communication may be edifying, it must be serious. By this I do not mean that it should be on all occasions strictly religious, but that it should never be inconsistent with the precepts and holy design of Christianity. There are occasions on which it is allowable to indulge moderately in witty or humorous remarks. There are ludicrous occurrences at which it is not sinful to smile; ridiculous notions and practices which may be more successfully combated with the weapons of ridicule than with those of reason and sober remonstrance. But there is always danger of going too far in this matter. Every extreme is error; and we are unhappily prone to excess even in lawful things. The power of habit is incalcula-

ble; it is this that finally forms and fixes the character for eternity. Hence the importance of cherishing those trains of thought, speech and behaviour which are commended and sanctioned by the sacred Scriptures. A man accustomed to gather useful ideas from passing events will be likely from the force of habit, not only to improve his own mind in morals and virtue, but to communicate salutary instruction to those with whom he converses. On the other hand, one who is habituated to levity and witticism is very liable to contemplate all objects through a medium of his own creating, and thus to give an air of ridicule to subjects of the most impressive and solemn kind. This is unhappy; it is wrong, it is dangerous. The heart is often by this means shielded from those religious and benign impressions, which the word of God and the dispensations of Providence are adapted to make on our minds, and which are designed to favour our usefulness and felicity both here and hereafter. Wit, to be either profitable or admissible on Christian principles, requires to be managed with great prudence. When wielded unskilfully, like a razor in the hand of a child, it is more likely to prove mischievous than useful. By excessive levity a man generally abridges his influence, which is indispensable to usefulness in society; he often, without intending it, offends his pious friends; and what is still more to be deprecated, not unfrequently excites a prejudice in the minds of the young or uninformed against sober habits, serious truths, and sacred ordinances. Communications producing such effects cannot be good for the use of edifying, can have no tendency to minister grace to the hearers; they are corrupt and ought not to be indulged in, as we would follow the inspired oracle in the text. Man was made for great and serious purposes, to receive and reciprocate the offices of kindness



among his fellows, to do good as opportunity serves, to obey and serve his Creator, and to be happy in the enjoyment of his favour for ever. We are continually surrounded with objects which demand our serious attention. In performing the duties of our calling, levity is of little use; in our daily exercises of devotion it is worse than useless. Those persons with whom we converse are often in trouble or in danger. They need our counsel, our sympathy, our active and laborious aid. We have before us scenes and expectations of a momentous and awful kind. What becomes of jesting in the chamber of sickness, at the death-bed, or the judgment-seat? These and many other considerations concur in urging us to comply with the apostle's advice, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth; but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

Secondly. Our "communication" should be seasonable. That is, it should be well-timed, and wisely adapted to the character and circumstances of the persons with whom we converse; or in whose hearing we speak. This point is so well understood as scarcely to need illustration. Yet it is a point on which, I apprehend, we often fail, and commit errors of an unpleasant and injurious tendency. Most persons have their favourite topics, which, without due regard to the right timing of discourses, they will naturally feel disposed to introduce more frequently than would be for edification. Suppose you meet a friend at a time when business or some private concern engages his thoughts, and claims his immediate attention; can he be expected, in such circumstances, to profit by your discourse on any other subject? Certainly not. To insist on his time or company in such a case, would be unreasonable. The merchant

engaged in despatching his ship; the lawyer, in preparing his plea; the preacher, in studying his sermon; or the mechanic, in completing by a given time a piece of work for a customer, ought not to be expected to sit down, even with his best friend, to converse on a subject not connected with the business in hand, however important it may be, and however fair may be its claims to his regard at another time. In like manner it would be an unseasonable communication of reproof, to admonish a man while he is intoxicated, for the sin of intoxication; or to lecture one in a fit of passion on the evils of violent anger, and the necessity of meekness and self-command. Would you reclaim a Sabbath-breaker or a profane swearer from the evil of his way, you must not rebuke him publicly; but approach him in private, and endeavour to convince him that you wish, not to render him contemptible, but to do him good, by saving him from disgrace and ruin. Would you argue a man out of some dangerous error; you must not take him while he is in the attitude of self-defence, warmly vindicating his sentiments, but in his cool reflecting moments, when conscience and reason, unbiassed by passion, may have an opportunity of acting with vigour; when the mental vision, unobstructed by the dust of controversy, shall be capable of appreciating evidence, and the understanding, calm and deliberative, will be most likely to yield to conviction, and form a judgment according to truth. Thus much for the right timing of our communication.

It is, also, to be adapted to the character and circumstances of those with whom we converse, or in whose hearing we speak. By this is meant the mode and the measure of our communication, rather than the matter. Truth is never to be sacrificed to complaisance. I would not "become all things to all men," in any other sense, or for any other pur-

pose than that which was intended by Paul; namely, that he "might save some," by "gaining them" over to the love and obedience of sound doctrine; 1 Cor. ix. 19, &c. We should neither surrender nor treacherously conceal principles which we verily believe to be scriptural, and of course favourable to correct morals and genuine piety. Yet there is such a thing as bigotry. It appeared among the disciples while the divine Master was yet with them, and he reproved it: "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus replied: forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us." Luke, ix. 49. There is also a something in the manner of endeavouring to do good, which our Lord represents under the idea of "casting pearls before swine." These, and the like indiscretions, we should avoid, as we would have our communications prove edifying. Are you in a company composed of persons attached to various denominations of Christians? Press not your own views of truth and duty so far, or so confidently, as to betray indifference to the feelings, or contempt for the opinions of others; perhaps as well-informed and conscientious as yourself. Are you thrown into company with an ingenious unbeliever in the Christian religion, whose blasphemy you cannot escape from, and whose sophistry you cannot combat without hazarding the honour of the gospel? Decline the unequal contest, and refer him to the Lelands, the Campbells, the Paleys, the Watsons, and the Dwights, who have refuted all the plausible cavils of infidelity; and who, by their immortal writings, have proved themselves able to measure swords with its ablest and most subtle champions. Are you desirous of instructing one who is ignorant of his duty and of the way of salvation? Trouble him not with the intricate and controverted matters

in revealed religion; but bring up to his view, and press upon his serious regard the plain doctrines, the first principles of the oracles of God. Are any of your acquaintances or associates neglecting the means of grace; such as the Sabbath, the worship of God's house, the reading of the Scriptures, and the solemn duties of the family and the closet? Improve every favourable opportunity of counselling them faithfully and kindly on these interesting and important subjects. Do you converse with any whose hearts are broken, and whose consciences are alarmed under a sense of their sin? Point them to Jesus—to his atoning blood—his perfect righteousness—his infinite fulness and divine compassion. Would you condole with the poor, the bereaved, or the disappointed? Remind them of the "true riches," and urge them to lay hold on eternal life. Do you visit the widow and the orphan in their affliction? Talk to them of the Heavenly Father, the widow's judge, the friend of the friendless, whose tender mercies are over all His works. Thus, adapting your conversation to times, characters, and circumstances, you may hope it will "edify, and, through a divine blessing, be the means of ministering grace to the hearers."

Thirdly. Our communication must be strictly chaste. That is, we must use no expressions in private or public, to friend or foe, which have a tendency to excite, directly or indirectly, emotions or designs of an impure or lascivious kind. All double entendres; smart, bold, and spicy sayings, as they are sometimes called, which go to infract the spirit of the seventh commandment, however ingeniously formed, however gorgeously mantled with the embellishments of style, are to be regarded as communications, in the last degree, corrupt and execrable; and the man who uses such language should be scrupulously shunned as a dangerous

companion, and unworthy of decent company. But, happily, the public sentiment, the predominant opinion is correct and strong on this point. Chastity in speech and behaviour is universally considered, except among the vicious and the vile, as indispensable to good breeding and common decency. I shall, therefore, spare myself the embarrassment of pointing out the mischiefs of its opposite; and proceed to observe that, to compass the object contemplated in the text,

Fourthly. Our communication must be charitable. This quality of speech may be viewed: First, as it respects those to whom—and, secondly, those of whom, we have occasion to speak. It is proper to remark here, that the charity intended in this article, and, indeed, in all our discourses on this subject, is to be exercised and manifested towards the persons of men; not towards their sentiments and conduct, unless these be according to godliness. As to those with whom we converse, if our aim be to edify them, our spirit and deportment towards them must be tender and kind; free from asperity, harshness, and a disposition to blame them for those failings from which none are entirely exempt. Persons must deem us their real friends before they will profit by our advice, or follow our counsels. Convince a person that you seek his good, and if he has any ingenuousness, tenderness of conscience, or sense of gratitude, you may caution and admonish him with some effect; otherwise, your labour will be in vain. It is, perhaps, in reference to this principle of our nature that Solomon says, “The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.” Ecc. xii. 11. And David, who was a lover of all good men, says, with admirable meekness and magnanimity, “Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and

let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head; for yet my prayer, also, shall be in their calamities." Ps. cxli. 5. We should try to make the most of this principle in our endeavours to promote the spiritual welfare of our kindred and intimate acquaintances.

In regard to those of whom we may have occasion to speak, duty to God and benevolence to the hearers, demand that the law of kindness should dwell upon our lips. I acknowledge it is sometimes proper to express our disapprobation of the conduct of those who are not present; but in all cases of this sort our words should be few and well guarded: putting ourselves in their stead, we should speak of them as we would have them speak of us in an exchange of circumstances. It may be laid down, I think, as an indubitable maxim, that all animadversion on the character of those who are absent, and who are thereby deprived of the opportunity of self-defence, from any other motive than that of maintaining truth and justice, is of the essence of slander. And yet how large a share of the conversation of many people is spent in remarking on the faults and foibles of their fellow sinners. This evil prevails to a shocking degree wherever party spirit runs high either in politics or religion. Its sources are envy, jealousy, pride, and ambitious rivalry; the bitter fruits that spring spontaneously and with luxuriance from the soil of our depraved nature. Its effects are as baleful as its sources are impure. It is the blight and the mildew of all that is fragrant and blooming in human society. The breath of detraction drives before it the soothing charities of fraternal kindness, makes men hard-hearted, selfish, hateful and hating one another. It is as opposite to the spirit of the gospel as is darkness to light, as Belial to Christ. Its communication is eminently corrupt. Under its envenomed

influence social concord and mutual confidence wither and perish. Instead of edifying, it severs the ties that bind man to man, and obliterates every incipient feature that goes to assimilate earth to heaven. So far from ministering grace to the hearers, it provokes and fosters malice and wickedness, and paves the way for truce-breaking, treachery, and every evil work.

Finally, as we would obey the injunction in the text, our communication must be free from all manner of profaneness. By this it is intended that we should not mention or allude to any of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, truths or works, with levity or irreverence. Our time will not permit us to expatiate on this article as largely as its importance might seem to require. The most obvious and striking violation of this rule of edifying conversation, is that of profane swearing, a practice strangely and distressingly common, and yet for the prevalence of which it seems difficult to account. That it is a sin every one admits; even swearers themselves acknowledge it is an offence; if not against God, it is against good manners. I have never heard or read of any person undertaking seriously to vindicate it. It is indeed, a sin to which there can be no temptation that one would think could influence a reasonable being. Nor is there any thing gained by it. It gratifies no sensual appetite. It gathers no laurels, secures no fame above that which may be acquired by vulgarity and sottishness. It inflicts no revenge even, that is felt or regarded. How strange it is then, that this species of corrupt communication should be so common that one cannot walk the streets without hearing it from persons of all ages and of both sexes, from the shrivelled lips of vice-worn decrepitude down to the child that can scarcely repeat the alphabet? Can this fact be accounted for but from the

deep and dreadful corruption of the human heart? Reason forbids the practice, philosophy condemns it, common decency abhors it. The Creator, from amid the thunder and lightning of his power, proclaims "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Yet swearing is practised; it is handed down from parents to children; each generation aiming to improve on the forms used by that which preceded it, so that it is true now, as it was in the days of old, "By reason of swearing the land mourneth." Well, profane swearer, we have but little hope of even bringing you to a pause in your downward career; yet we would expostulate with you, and entreat you to consider betimes the mischief you do, and the ruin you are bringing upon your soul. You greatly increase the wickedness and aggravate the guilt of your country; you impair the sanctity of the judicial oath; your practice gives countenance to perjury; you teach the young to swear, your own children, the children of your neighbours; and thus you not only exclude yourself from heaven, but you block up the way to others. You may think this a little sin, but you will find God true to his word; he will not hold you guiltless so long as you continue to take his name in vain. O, turn then from the evil of your way, ere death palsies your tongue; for woe to him that striveth with his Maker!

But besides this gross and vulgar species of profaneness, there are what an elegant writer calls "minced oaths and mock-petitions," which should be carefully excluded from our communication. Some swear by their faith, their honour, their truth, &c., which is not only profane, but carries with it an air of idolatry, for the thing sworn by, is substituted for the occasion in the place of God. These



and the like are minced oaths; impure, contaminating words. All exclamations expressive of love, joy, surprise or indignation, in which the names or titles of the divine Being are used lightly and inconsiderately, may be pronounced mock-petitions, and ought to be avoided by those who would maintain a conversation becoming the gospel. There is still another sort of profaneness, which consists in citing passages of Scripture, in alluding to certain religious ordinances or dispensations of Providence, for the purposes of wit and amusement. All freedom of this nature with any thing that the Almighty has said, done or instituted, is irreverent, wicked, and extensively mischievous. He who trifles with divine things offends his Maker, impairs the influence of religion on the minds of others, sins against his own soul, and forsakes his own mercies. But to conclude: Learn from this subject the necessity of having the heart renewed and cleansed by the grace of God. The heart is the fountain of thought, speech and action; and that it is naturally an impure fountain, hear the testimony of Jesus: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man." Matt. xv. 19. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; a good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things: and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things:" Matt. xii. 25. May God give us all, the regenerate heart and the right spirit, through Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

## LECTURE XXIII.

GRIEVING THE SPIRIT, WHEREBY WE ARE  
SEALED.

EPHESIANS, IV. 30—32.—And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

THE relation which believers bear to the Holy Spirit, is of a most sacred character. It is this blessed agent that applies to us the redemption which is in Christ, that renews our hearts, enlightens our minds, subdues our obstinacy, purifies our affections, guides our feet in the way of righteousness, and renders us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. It is He that gives us a right understanding of the Scriptures, that makes us feel our obligation to God our Saviour, that works in us repentance, faith, love, and all good thoughts and holy desires; that helps our infirmities, scatters our fears, inspires our hopes, animates our devotions, sanctifies our sorrows, and causes us to triumph in Christ. He is our Comforter, our Counsellor, and unerring Guide. And in return for these kind and gracious offices he claims our subjection to his influence, and our undivided confidence in his teaching and guidance. Our hearts are rightfully demanded as his throne, and our bodies as his temple; the faculties and members of the whole man are to be consecrated to his service, and remain for ever at his disposal as instruments of righteousness.

Who that acknowledges these things can fail to admit the force and propriety of the charge, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." The

Spirit is denominated **HOLY**, not only because he is in himself essentially pure and perfect, but also because the design and effect of his operations on men is holiness, i. e. deliverance from the guilt and defilement of sin, and a gradual restoration of the divine image in which man was created, and which consists chiefly in moral rectitude and purity.

“Sealed unto the day of redemption:”—By the day of redemption, in this connexion, seems to be intended the day of general judgment, when all the purposes of divine mercy, as they respect this present world, shall have been accomplished; when the redeemed of all nations shall appear with Christ in glory, their souls being completely sanctified and re-united to their raised and immortalized bodies, and thus enter heaven, there to participate in the joys of their Lord for ever. In the first chapter of this epistle, 13th and 14th verses, we find a similar passage, where, by “the redemption of the purchased possession” seems clearly to be meant the resurrection of the bodies of believers, with a view to their entrance into eternal glory. Why, then, should Christians fear to die? Let the dust return at the appointed time to its kindred element. The soul is not entombed. The spirit goes to God who gave it; where, employed in some way suited to its disembodied state, it waits in full assurance of hope that its tenement, dissolved in weakness and corruption, shall be raised in power, incorruptible, to share in the felicities of the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Not a particle of the sleeping dust essential to your personal identity shall be forgotten or left behind in the great rising day. The bodies of believers form a part of the Redeemer’s purchased possession; and though they should have been consumed by fire, devoured by wild beasts, lost in ocean’s capacious bed, or scattered to the wind in ten thousand

fragments, they shall be forthcoming when demanded by him who is "the resurrection and the life." May these precious truths be present to our minds, and be realized by our faith in the hour of death; so shall our latter end be tranquil and full of hope.

"Whereby ye are sealed:"—As I have endeavoured to illustrate the idea conveyed by these words in a lecture on a passage just referred to in the first chapter of this epistle, it will be sufficient to observe here in passing, that the Holy Spirit does, in the graces which he produces in the souls of believers, impress an indelible signature upon them, by which they shall be known and acknowledged for ever as fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of faith; as members of God's holy family, chosen of the Father, ransomed by the Son and sanctified by the Spirit, to show forth the praises of redeeming love throughout the unmeasured and immeasurable duration of the world to come. Blessed indeed are they who are thus marked as the property of Jehovah! And, readers, if you would ascertain whether you belong to God, you must examine yourselves, and try your tempers, your hopes and your conduct by the law and the testimony of Jesus. The impression of the Holy Spirit's seal corresponds exactly to the delineations of sacred Scripture. God's people are described in the Bible as penitent for their sins, as having no confidence in the flesh, as relying on Christ for justification and eternal life, as obedient and submissive, meek, patient, just and charitable; as delighting in the word and ordinances of their God; as living not after the flesh, but after the spirit; as hungering and thirsting after righteousness, not content with their present religious attainments, but pressing onward for the prize of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Now, if you possess these and the like characteristics, even in

an incipient and feeble state, you certainly have reason to hope that the Holy Spirit is fixing his seal upon you, and means to have you recognised as a part of the purchased possession in the day of redemption, that bright and joyous day when the Redeemer shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. On the other hand, if you are destitute of scriptural evidences of discipleship, then—but I need not proceed. The Saviour and Judge of the world has told you that you are in a state of condemnation, and that the wrath of God abideth on you. O that thoughtless men, whose day of grace passing like a meteor, will, if not speedily improved, soon leave them shrouded in the darkness of despair, would seriously ponder this saying of Jesus Christ! May God awaken their slumbering consciences, and dispose them to lay hold on the hope of the gospel.

“Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God:”—What are we to understand by grieving the Spirit? Grief, in man, is a painful emotion which may arise from various causes. We may be grieved for our sins, we may be grieved by losses and disappointments, or by ill treatment from those of whom we had a right to expect better things. But when predicated of God, as is frequently the case in the sacred writings, it is to be understood with some limitation. The Divine Being, from the perfection, simplicity and immutability of his nature, is not capable, as man is, of any painful or uneasy sensation. When the Scriptures, therefore, ascribe to him such passions or affections as move or influence mankind, this is done in condescension to our weakness, and in accordance with our mode of conceiving of what is agreeable or disagreeable to his pure and perfect will. Accordingly if we reject his counsels, profane his ordinances, slight his grace, indulge any known sin, or neglect any of his com-

mands, we may be said to grieve him; because such conduct is contrary to his holy nature, repugnant to his righteous law, and incompatible with our own true interest and happiness.

What dispositions should we cultivate then, and what course of conduct pursue, that we may in some humble measure comply with the divine injunction before us? With serious Christians, it must be a matter of no ordinary concern, to demean themselves in such a manner as not to offend that blessed agent on whose gracious influence they depend for spiritual life, religious peace, and everlasting consolation. We are dependent on the Spirit, not only for the renovation of our depraved hearts, but for strength and skill to resist the temptations of Satan, to overcome the allurements of the world, and run the race set before us, looking unto Jesus. This we are taught very clearly by our Saviour in those admirable sayings delivered to his disciples on the eve of his sufferings on the cross. "I will pray the Father," says he, "and he will give you another Comforter that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeketh him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." John xiv. 16 and 17. "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."—"He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." John xiv. 26; xvi. 14. And Paul says, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." Rom. v. 5. Hear his prayer for the believers at Rome: "Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost!" Rom. xv. 13.

If Christians, therefore, would enjoy the presence, the aid, and comforts of the Holy Spirit, let them carefully avoid every thing that is offensive to him; let them cherish those dispositions, and endeavour to maintain that kind of conduct which are commended and enjoined in the Sacred Scriptures. As ye would not "grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption," be attentive to his counsels, observe his ordinances, and rely on his gracious influence to work in you the good pleasure of his will. This is, perhaps, the best general rule that we can prescribe to ourselves on this very important article of Christian duty. We are grieved when our friends neglect our advice, and, in consequence of such neglect, fall into trouble or sin. We advise, warn, and admonish our children for their good, from motives of benevolence and affection; how grievous and distressing it is to our hearts when they prove untractable, disobedient, and self-willed. Now, the Holy Spirit condescends to become our teacher. He knows our ignorance, our evil propensities, and the diversified allurements and temptations which assail us at every point, and in every stage of our progress from the cradle to the grave. His aim is to guard us from evil, to guide us in the way of peace, and make us wise unto salvation. He has, therefore, given us ample instructions in the word of his truth; has instituted ordinances in which his doctrines are presented under the impressive form of symbols; he proffers to renew us in the temper of our minds, to help our infirmities, to direct our thoughts, to encourage our hope in God, and, at last to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. And, if after all these kind provisions for our good we disregard his instructions; absent ourselves from his ordinances, under pretext of their inutility; if, confiding in our own fancied wisdom

and goodness, we decline imploring his regenerating and sanctifying influence, how must he be grieved at our ingratitude and folly; and what can we reasonably expect but that he will leave us, at least for a season, to try our own strength, to grope in the dark, to mourn the loss of the soul-refreshing presence of our God, and to learn, from painful experience, our absolute need of a divine guide, and a heavenly comforter? Ah! Christians, grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed. If you do, you will suffer loss; for, though you may not be utterly forsaken, yet you will be chastised; you will forsake your own mercies, and spend your strength for naught. You can never attain to the stature of a perfect man in Christ, without the aid and informing power of the Holy Comforter. He knows your frame, and remembers that you are but dust. Hence the liberal measures he has taken, and the matchless condescension he has manifested to remedy your weakness and supply your wants. Insult him not, then, by leaning on your own understanding, or by relying on your own comparative virtue. It is by his indwelling and gracious power that you are admitted to the high and holy privilege of communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Commit your way unto him, and he will perfect that which concerneth you, by making "you accepted in the Beloved."

But we must, for the present, confine ourselves to the text. Here are some of the counsels or dictates of the Holy Spirit, which claim our serious regard: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice."

Among the things here specified, and which we are to put away, as we would not grieve the Spirit, there are shades of difference, which might be pointed out, did time permit. But it is not neces-



sary to remark on each separately. Bitterness, wrath, and intemperate anger, are all less or more malicious; and evil-speaking is the usual mode of expressing these ill feelings. The meaning of the apostle is, I suppose, that we should give no place to such disturbers of that peace and religious concord of which the Holy Spirit is the author, and which when cherished and reciprocated by the disciples of Christ, never fail to bless and beautify the kingdom of grace. All turbulent and malignant passions are inconsistent with the hallowed spirit and tendency of the gospel, and should therefore be put away from the hearts, the families, and the worshipping assemblies of Christians. No man whose soul is the seat of bitterness can enjoy fellowship with the God of love. Nor can domestic comfort be experienced, to any considerable extent, in a family where wrath and evil-speaking abound. And in a Christian community, malicious clamour is a monstrous anomaly in the visible kingdom of God; at once hostile to edification, and grievous to the Holy One.

“The Spirit, like a peaceful dove,  
Flies from the realms of noise and strife.”

“And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted; forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” Two things are recommended in this verse as congenial to the aim and influence of the Holy Spirit, viz: sympathy and the forgiveness of injuries. Sympathy in its literal import, signifies suffering with another, and is used to denote the feeling solicitude of a benevolent heart for the afflicted. It cannot be regarded as one of the distinguishing graces of the Christian; for it is a principle of our nature, and it is often found, in a high degree, connected with very bad qualities. Indeed, it is observable in a measure

among inferior animals; and its benign effects indicate very strongly the goodness of the Creator. And here, as in all other instances, Christianity comprises and embodies, exemplifies and enjoins on her disciples whatsoever is honest, lovely, pure, and praiseworthy, either in humanity or in the religion of nature. Christ was eminently tender-hearted. He wept at the grave of Lazarus, and condoled with the bereaved widow of Nain. His apostles, touched with a coal from the same altar, were also sympathetic. Their epistles possess a charming unction of celestial kindness: "Weep with them that weep;" "forget not to entertain strangers;" "consider them that are in bonds, as being yourselves also in the body," &c., are maxims of divine benevolence, and of vast practical utility. What is called the milk of human kindness is a pleasant thing in society; but the balm of Christian sympathy is far preferable. Let it never be wanting in its prayers, its counsels, and seasonable ministrations among the professed followers of Jesus. It is indubitably incumbent on Christian societies and individuals to feel for one another in affliction, and help each other in time of need, as occasion may require, and according to the ability which God hath given them. With such sacrifices the Holy Spirit is well pleased. The pressure of sorrow is thus lightened, the breaking heart bound up, the social tie strengthened, and charity, like the rose, imparts its fragrance to all who come within its cheering influence.

"Forgiving one another." It is here supposed by Paul that personal offences will occur, even among Christians. And so they do; but they are not to break the unity of the spirit, or sever the bond of peace. They are to be removed, forgiven, and buried at the foot of the cross. The forgiveness of injuries is a Christian doctrine altogether.

The law of honour does not recognize it as at all compatible with a manly spirit; it is mean, pusillanimous, dastardly. A duel, though it should make widows, and orphans, and a hell for the combatants, is better than forgiveness. Philosophy talks about *forgiving*, though she is not willing to *forget* an injury; nor has she ever been able to adduce authoritative examples, or to render her dogmas on the subject of any considerable use and efficiency among mankind. But the Christian religion has laid down the principle in express and unequivocal terms. The great Teacher from heaven has exemplified it in the most illustrious and impressive manner. It is enjoined and inculcated in the New Testament in a great variety of forms, and under the most awful penalties: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors—Except ye forgive men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses—Avenge not yourselves; vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord—Render to no man evil for evil—If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." I know the duty is difficult; it does not accord with the sentiments of depraved nature. The principle is strictly divine; and to reduce it to practice from right motives, requires the aid of divine grace. Therefore it is that we pronounce it exclusively a Christian doctrine. If a man does me an injury, I have a right to justice; and he is bound to confess or repair the wrong upon my appeal to his sense of duty. But if I cannot obtain reparation by fair and equitable means, I must and will forgive him, and pray for him, and do him good and not evil. It is dutiful, it is magnanimous, it is God-like so to do. Final and exact retribution is the prerogative of Jehovah. I am myself a miserable offender—I need forgiveness; and, if I am a Christian, I am and shall be forgiven all my

offences. Here, then, is a consideration which, to the pious and penitent heart, is conclusive and irresistible. "Even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Now, God not only remits the punishment due to the sinner, but receives him into favour and loves him for Christ's sake. Never talk of forgiving an injury, therefore, while you refuse to forget it. This is a delusive and self-deceiving effort to evade the law of Christ. Evangelical forgiveness involves a disposition for reconciliation and reciprocity of kind and friendly offices.

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## LECTURE XXIV.

### IMITATING GOD, AS CHILDREN.

EPHESIANS, V. 1, 2.—Be ye, therefore, followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour.

THE word here rendered *followers*, signifies in the original language of the New Testament, *imitators*; and might have been so translated. Both terms, however, convey substantially the same meaning; for we cannot follow any one, without in some measure imitating him. "Be ye imitators of God." is clearly the import of the exhortation. This is a high aim, and might, at first view, seem presumptuous. God is a pure and perfect spirit. We are guilty, polluted, erring creatures; composed of body and mind; both frail and disordered by sin. How then, can we, unholy creatures, dwelling in houses of clay, and liable to be crushed before the moth, think of resembling the HIGH and LOFTY ONE, who inhabiteth eternity, who reigns unrivalled, and without an associate, in his divine and glorious supremacy? The aim is indeed, grand; the thought

is sublime; but it is not presumptuous. Paul uttered the text, by inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The end contemplated is attainable; the duty is prescribed in intelligible terms; it is obligatory; and, through grace, it is practicable. When we are required to be imitators of God, it is not intended that we should cease to be human beings, and become angels; that we should renounce our place in the scale of creation, and seek some fanciful distinction in the kingdom of Jehovah. Nor is it meant, that we should abandon our stations in society, neglect our relative and social duties, retire from the active world, and give ourselves up to the indolent and self-enjoined musing of a monkish life. This is not the design. But it is, that, in the place assigned us by the Creator, and with the capacities, powers and opportunities, which he has given us, we should, in humble reliance on his gracious and promised aid, strive to be like him in temper and practice, in all his imitable excellencies. It is resemblance to God, not equality with him, at which we are to aim. Now, in the nicest imitation that can be found, or of which our minds can conceive, there must still be a difference between the copy and the original. No two distinct individual things in the universe, possess exactly the same qualities. The resemblance may be, and often is strong and obvious; but, on close inspection, you shall find a distinguishing and unequivocal diversity. In the instance of God and the good man, the imitation must fall infinitely short of the divine model. Yet there is a likeness, a real likeness, a progressive likeness; a likeness provided for in the plan of redemption; a likeness which is indispensable to communion with the Father of spirits, and to our participation of the imperishable felicities of Heaven.

When urged, as we are frequently in Scripture,

to follow, to be like, or to imitate God, our disobedient hearts are apt to say, 'The standard is too high, it were a vain thing for us to attempt conformity to the GREAT SUPREME—we might, with some hope of success, try to live as did Abraham, or Moses, or Paul; but for a frail creature to think of being like the Great and Holy one of Israel, is too much. This, reader, is a suggestion of unbelief. Let us not yield to its influence. It may seem plausible, as it sometimes approaches us under the garb of humility; but it is deceptive and anti-christian. Our merciful Creator enjoins nothing upon us but what is practicable, by his grace helping our infirmities.

Real Christians are begotten unto a lively hope, called out of darkness into marvellous light, born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God. They are the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. They have received the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father. They are of the household of God; and in this, as in every other household where the relation of parent and child exists, there is a family-likeness. The child of nature imitates its earthly parent; so the children of grace are imitators of their Heavenly Father. This idea is clearly conveyed in the text, "Be ye, therefore, imitators of God, as dear children." Mark, here, the kind condescension of the Most High! He recognizes his people, as his children—dear children—dear, beyond all his other works—dear, as the objects of his electing, regenerating, and redeeming love, bought back from the captivity of Satan, by "a price all price beyond;"—dear, as being nearly related to Christ, his only co-essential and eternally begotten Son;—dear, as the subjects of his grace, and legatees of an incorruptible inheritance;—dear, as they are destined

to proclaim and exhibit his declarative glory throughout the incalculable and all-absorbing cycle of eternity.

Yes, readers, those of you who are indeed the children of God, are very dear to him. You may be vile and ill-deserving in your own view; you may be little known and less esteemed by the world, but you are not of the world, even as your Saviour is not of the world. You belong to another family; and the blessed Head of that family regards you with infinite and everlasting kindness. Jesus, the great High Priest of your profession, loves you and bears your names on his breast-plate while interceding for you within the veil in the true Holy of Holies. The Spirit of God loves you; for he dwells in you to seal you, and to sanctify you for heaven. And, remember, divine love, i. e. the love of complacency, wherever it exists, on whomsoever it operates, is reciprocal and re-active. They, whom God loves as his redeemed children, do love him and all that bear his image, as certainly and uniformly as the ingenuous child loves its natural parents. I know that our love to God is far from being as intense, or as decisively supreme as it should be; but there are times when every genuine believer can say with unfeigned rapture, "Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee!" Or, in the words of the poet:

"Lord, what a heaven of saving grace  
Shines through the beauties of thy face,  
And lights our passions to a flame!  
O, how we love thy charming name!  
  
When I can say, My God is mine;  
When I can feel his glories shine,  
I tread the world beneath my feet,  
And all the earth calls good or great."

In the next verse we have a modified and extended view of the subject, which is at once en-

couraging and impressive: "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour."

A man's walk usually signifies in Scripture his prevailing disposition and general deportment. So I understand it here. The meaning is, that we should exercise love to God, and benevolence towards one another; always endeavouring to conduct in such a manner as to exhibit and extend the influence of those amiable affections. In cultivating this holy disposition, and pursuing a correspondent practice—a practice which shall unfold the purity of the gospel and attest the sincerity of our faith—we are to imitate God in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Here we have a divine and perfect model, rendered visible, and tangible, and attractive superlatively, and beyond all that earth or heaven ever witnessed before. In Jesus we see God manifested in the flesh; the Deity united to humanity; Omnipotence to weakness; immaculate purity personally joined to the seed of Abraham, and exposed to the assaults of Satan and the allurements of the world. We see him born in humble circumstances, attending during childhood to his filial duties, and subsequently passing through a vast variety of trying scenes, till the great work for which he came into the world was consummated on the cross. So that in every situation in life or in death, we may ask, and the oracles of God will supply us with an answer, How would Christ have acted in similar circumstances? And if we feel our weakness and need of supernatural aid, we are warranted to expect the influence and guidance of the indwelling and Almighty Spirit, the promised Comforter. Thus looking unto Jesus and relying on the teaching and gracious succours of the Spirit, we are to walk in love. Love is to



be the ruling principle, the commanding and all-controlling affection of our souls; because God is love, and we must be like him before we can either please or enjoy his blissful presence. Why is it said in Scripture that "God is love?" Because this attribute in its various branches and operations denotes more fully than any of his perfections the excellent glory of his moral character. This is the principle that gives value to the wisdom, preciousness to the truth, and sanction to the law and justice of the Creator. This it is that renders it matter of joy and gladness to earth and heaven, that "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." It is the love of God that wrought our salvation, that provided a ransom for lost souls, that opened the gates of heaven, that proclaimed salvation to the world, and that now calls upon sinners to turn from their evil ways and live for ever. It was love that impelled the Redeemer to give himself "for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." No one who is acquainted with the Bible, and believes its representations to be true, can be at a loss to know what is meant by Christ's giving himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God. The passage obviously points to the cross on which he died to complete his obedience and sufferings for our salvation; to the shedding of his blood as a sacrificial and propitiatory offering through which we have or may have forgiveness of sins. This offering is said to be "for a sweet-smelling savour," in allusion to those typical sacrifices that were prepared with certain odoriferous spices, and to indicate the acceptableness of the offering, its efficacy in propitiating insulted justice, in healing the breach between God and us miserable offenders; and in this way for ever perfecting them that are sanctified. Now this propitiation, this broad and deep foundation of all our hopes of pardon and eternal

life, was the fruit of divine love. The Saviour was not dragged reluctantly to the altar. Love was the grand, actuating principle of his interposition on our behalf. He died voluntarily, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. And the whole of his conduct while on earth was marked with kindness, sympathy and compassion. His soul was a fountain of benevolence, from which the social charities issued forth in a thousand refreshing streams. Malice, envy, and revenge, those vermin of the pit and pests of human happiness, were strangers to his bosom. He spent an active and laborious life in the cause of the guilty and the miserable, and with his latest breath the language of forgiveness flowed from his lips in strains of tenderness and meek majesty, such as never were heard before in the present world.

Be it our constant aim, then, to be followers of him, as dear children; and let us walk in love as he also loved us, and "gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour." By the sacrifice of his blood a way has been provided, whereby we may attain to that love which is the fulfilling of the law. If our hearts have been renewed by divine grace—if Christ be in us, the hope of glory—if the Divine Sanctifier has taken us under his tuition—if we have the faith of God's elect, and are seeking heaven on gospel principles, we shall certainly be imitators of Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us. You say you despair of being enabled successfully to imitate the Father, considered as an absolute God, a Spirit whom no man hath seen at any time; look, then, unto Jesus, the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person. You know by whom, and by what authority, it is said, "I and my Father are one; whoso hath seen me, hath seen the Father also." "The Father judgeth

no man; but hath delivered all judgment unto the Son; that all men might honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." Be ye, therefore, imitators of God, your Saviour. Christ is love incarnate, and therefore the more easily imitable. The evangelists inform you how his love operated; how much he denied himself; how much he prayed and watched for the good of others; how patiently he bore with the infirmities of his friends; how he forbore to take vengeance on his enemies; how he sympathized with the afflicted, instructed the ignorant, and ministered to the wants of the needy. Go and do likewise. You cannot do so much, nor do so well as he did; but by the aid of his grace, you can follow humbly in the long train of the many thousands of thousands who have gone, and are going to glory in the way which he has consecrated. And, remember, he has set you an example, and requires you, as you would not be disowned by him at the day of judgment, to pursue his steps. Let none object that the example is too high, that it is discouraging to human frailty. This is a scruple of an unbelieving heart. No effort at duty ought to be made in mere mortal strength. While the command, "follow thou me," presses upon your conscience, divine compassion whispers in the ear of faith, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Besides, let us recollect that the law of our God is perfect; if it were not, it would be unworthy of obedience. The love which that law demands is perfect; and no love of an inferior kind will be sustained as the fulfilment of the law. We are not, indeed, to expect salvation by the deeds of the law. We are not to imitate God that we may thereby merit eternal life; neither are we to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ that we may, by so doing, deserve heaven. Neither love, nor faith, nor any other grace that we can

possibly exercise, is the procuring or meritorious cause of our salvation. The atonement of Christ, i. e., his blood and righteousness, his offering and sacrifice, has this honour alone. "We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." "Grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life." But then it should be known, and never overlooked, that the law and the gospel of God have one and the same end in view; namely, the reimpression of the divine image on our minds. This divine image is the very thing aimed at in sanctification. Now, to be imitators of God, as dear children, and to walk in love, as Christ also loved us, is to grow in conformity to him, in that reigning attribute which forms the glory of his character, and secures the happiness of his kingdom. No model, therefore, short of perfection will answer our purpose. No example that ever was exhibited on this earth, excepting that of Jesus, can be followed, in all points, without sin. And, while men content themselves with low standards of holiness, their views will be grovelling and their attainments small. Give us a perfect model, and we shall have the stronger inducement to copy it with care. Give us a wise and unerring leader, and we shall follow him with confidence and ardour. Our love cannot be infinite, but it may be pure in kind. The light of the sun surpasses that of a candle; but the qualities of both are the same. "Be ye, therefore, followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice unto God for a sweet smelling savour.

As an improvement of the subject, let us mark the manner in which this love, which we are to cultivate in imitation of God, will show itself in our practice. 1. As God himself is the best being in the universe, it is plain that if we imitate him, he

will have the first and chief place in our affections. And this will be evinced by our reverential awe of his infinite majesty, by our delight in his government, and cheerful submission to the dispensations of his providence; by our relish for his truth, and all the spiritual provisions of his house; by our attachment to his cause and kingdom; by our habits of devotion and strict attention to all those ordinances and means by which he manifests himself to our souls, and permits us to cast our care upon him and give ourselves entirely to him in holy fellowship.

2. If we are followers of God as dear children, we shall imitate his kind regard to his people. These we shall esteem as the excellent of the earth; we shall choose them as our companions, sympathize in their sorrows, and endeavour, whenever occasion offers, to be helpers of their joy.

3. We shall imitate God, also, in his compassion for the wicked. For these we shall not fail to offer fervent intercessions that they may be brought to the love of the truth, and be turned from the error of their ways. We shall contribute of our substance as the Lord hath prospered us, and of our exertions as we have opportunity, for the furtherance of the glorious gospel of God our Saviour. We shall earnestly long for the fulfilment of the prophetic promise, when all flesh shall see the salvation of our God, and when his saving health shall be known to all nations; nor shall we be backward in doing our part for the general interests of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world; and while thus exercised we shall be growing in grace, and imbibing more and more the spirit of Christ. How holy and how grand is the aim and tendency of the Christian religion! It makes us imitators of God, as dear children; it redeems us from the power of sin, engages us in the most noble pursuits, and enstamps upon our souls the image of Him who is the source of felicity and the perfection of beauty!

## LECTURE XXV.

## NON-CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD.

EPHESIANS, V. 3—13.—But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye, therefore, partakers with them: for ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light. (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them: for it is a shame even to speak of those things that are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

IN discoursing on a passage of Scripture comprising such a variety of matter as is brought to view in the verses just cited, it will be impossible to maintain that unity of design, or that connected chain of argument which you have a right to expect in a well constructed sermon. Indeed, lecturing is not restricted, in this particular, to the rules of sermonizing. The aim of the lecturer is to unfold the meaning of the sacred text in a plain and simple manner, connecting with the exposition suitable remarks and instructions of a practical kind.

The general object of the apostle in the passage now before us, is to persuade Christians to live worthy of their high vocation; to avoid and bear testimony against all indulgences and usages which are inconsistent with the pure and holy principles of the gospel. The evils specified and alluded to were not only prevalent, but were actually counte-

nanced and fostered by the religious rites of the heathen in general, and particularly by the Eleusinian and the Bacchanalian abominations celebrated with superstitious enthusiasm and almost incredible pomp at Ephesus, and in some of the chief towns of ancient Greece. And although Christianity has done much towards exposing the turpitude and checking the progress of such scandalous vices, she has not yet succeeded in putting them entirely without her visible precincts. While, therefore, any vestiges of such heinous offences remain, occasional animadversion upon their enormity will be justifiable, and even necessary in the discharge of our Christian duties. Men ought to know and acknowledge, and if possible be made to feel, that fleshly lusts war against the soul, and provoke the just and fearful displeasure of the Almighty.

Fornication and uncleanness, are terms which convey ideas sufficiently definite to render further explication needless. Covetousness means inordinate or excessive desire; and this desire may be either for sensual gratifications, or for wealth, honour, or distinction among men. From its connection in this place, it seems to be taken in a large sense to denote the indulgence of any passion, whether for animal pleasure or worldly advantages, beyond the legitimate bounds of reason and religion. This is covetousness in its most extended but true and literal import. And must this master sin of so great a portion of mankind rank with the base and offensive vices just before mentioned? Yes; the Holy Ghost has classed them together, and pronounced upon them the same sentence of condemnation: "Let neither fornication, nor uncleanness, nor covetousness, be once named among you." We are not prohibited the naming of these things by way of rebuke or disapprobation, when truth or the due maintenance of discipline demands

it. The meaning is, that our hearts, words and actions should be such as to furnish no ground for a just charge against us concerning these disgraceful and unchristian practices. "As becometh saints." Such things are altogether unsuitable to our profession as disciples of Christ and saints of God; persons furnished with ample instruction in things pertaining to life and godliness, and therefore solemnly bound to be holy in all manner of conversation, even as He who has called us is holy.

"Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks." Every thing that tends to provoke or cherish impure thoughts or desires; all unchaste discourse, however witty, or with whatsoever colloquial talent it may be conducted, is inconvenient, unseemly, and inadmissible among Christians. "Let your speech be always with grace seasoned with salt," (Col. iv. 6,) is an excellent maxim. They who indulge a hope that they have been redeemed from the vain conversation of a sinful world, should not permit themselves to return to it on any occasion. True courtesy does not require it; Christian obligation forbids it, and the gracious heart abhors it. The disciples of Christ are furnished with topics of discourse of the most entertaining, dignified, and useful kind. The hourly bounties and instructive events of Providence; the inexhaustible treasures of sacred Scripture; the heights and depths of redeeming love; the warranted hope of heaven, with its untold glories and ceaseless triumphs, supply ample matter for useful conversation and joint acknowledgments to the blessed author of all good. By dwelling on these and the like sober yet delightful subjects, our social intercourse may always be turned to good account. We may thus encourage the timid, confirm the wavering, comfort the feeble minded, and



prepare our own hearts and the hearts of others to render thanks unto God for his numerous and unspeakable mercies. At all events, we shall thus escape those stings of conscience which often follow that foolish talking and jesting which are neither convenient nor suitable to the character of Christians. Nor let it be imagined that the right ordering of our conversation on these points is a small concern: "For this ye know," says Paul, "that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." The covetous man is an idolater, inasmuch as he yields to the creature that place in his affections which is due to the Creator. The object of his most ardent pursuit is wealth. In this he glories; in this he trusts; and for the attainment of this he violates the most sacred obligations of duty. He neither loves God supremely, nor regards his neighbour with a charitable frame of mind. For an "inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God," he has no desire; offers no prayers, and possesses no fitness. He is, therefore, excluded along with the voluptuous and the vile. This ye know, says the apostle. It is an obvious truth; well understood and generally acknowledged among Christians; clearly revealed and fairly deducible from the design of the gospel and the nature of salvation. We have need to look narrowly into our hearts concerning this inordinate and idolatrous desire. It is a very common sin, but that circumstance does not render it the less heinous. Few ill propensities of our nature are more dangerous. It is not easily detected, because it assumes various forms, and suggests a multitude of pretexts of a plausible and deceptive character in its own defence. Passion may warp the judgment, and ingenious apologies may for a time pacify conscience; "but God is not

mocked." His law determines what sin is, and his truth is pledged to see it punished. Pretended philosophers may flatter you that there can be no harm in gratifying your natural inclinations, but "let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." "Children of disobedience" is a Hebrew phrase, and denotes persons who are remarkably disobedient. It may refer primarily to the Gentiles who are not blessed with the light of the gospel; and if so, the drift of the apostle's argument is this: If the wrath of God cometh upon the heathen for the sins before mentioned, how can professing Christians expect to indulge in such abominations with impunity? Such expectation will certainly prove fallacious. Our calling is a holy one. Our advantages are great; and it is a maxim in the divine government, that "To whom much is given, of him much will be required:" "Be not ye, therefore, partakers with them; for ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." The Ephesian converts had been once in a state of moral darkness like their heathen neighbours; but now the Sun of Righteousness had risen upon them with healing in his wings; the grace of the gospel had appeared to them, teaching them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly; they were, therefore, to regard themselves as children of the light, or enlightened children, and under peculiar obligations to decline a participation in those evil indulgences which are the fruits of ignorance and sin. Let Christians acknowledge and realize the force of this argument for a holy life. Whatever extenuating circumstances may be alleged on behalf of the pagan world in the day of judgment, they who bask in the meridian rays of evangelical light have no cloak for their sin. They know their

Lord's will, and have the strongest possible inducements to keep his precepts. The Redeemer died to save them from sin; he has given them ordinances and promises, privileges and instructions eminently suited to wean them from the world, and to make them a peculiar people, zealous of good works. "Let them not, therefore, be partakers with the ungodly in their impious ways." This is a maxim of weighty meaning and great practical importance. We may share in the guilt of crimes which we do not actually perpetrate. The receiver of stolen goods is a partaker in the sin of theft. He who supplies a foreign enemy with the means of annoying his country, is a traitor; and, in part, answerable for the mischief that may ensue. The seconds to a duel partake with the principals in the guilt of blood-shedding. The case is the same with the parent who affords to a profligate son the means of unlawful pleasure; and so likewise with the civil magistrate and the gospel minister, who countenance or connive at public offences which they might correct, in part at least, by vigilance and energy. Yes, as we would not partake with the wicked in their guilt and punishment, we must, so far as may be in our power, withhold from them the means of doing wrong; we must on all suitable occasions bear testimony against their evil deeds; we must employ our influence and authority to prevent or arrest those criminal practices, "because of which the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience:" ("For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.") By this parenthetical clause, the apostle reminds us that real Christians are renewed and influenced by the Holy Spirit of God, whose sanctifying effects in all instances where opportunity is afforded, will appear in their life and manners. Goodness, righteousness, and truth, are the prominent features

of the divine image; and by these qualities, and their various branches, the children of light are distinguished from the children of disobedience. "Proving what is acceptable to the Lord." Christians are not to fall in with any usages that may happen to be common and fashionable, without inquiring whether they be right or not. Their duty is to please God; to do that, and that only, which he regards with approbation; and hence the necessity of "taking heed to our ways, according to his word." Men may devise popular schemes of religion; they may invent showy forms of worship, and heap to themselves self-imposed rites and ceremonies, but without the sanction of a "Thus saith the Lord," all such contrivances are worse than useless; they are mischievous; instead of helps, they become substitutes to that which is good and acceptable to the Lord; lifeless forms, baseless fabrics, powerless saviours, refuges of lies.

Of the truth of this remark we have a strong intimation in what follows: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them; for it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret; but all things that are reprovèd are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light." The apostle here alludes to those impure rites which were celebrated in honour of Ceres, one of the pagan goddesses, first in Greece, and afterwards in Rome, till they were abolished by Theodosius the Great. In these corrupt festivals, things were practised under cover of nocturnal darkness, which it would be indecent even to name; and secrecy was enjoined on the deluded votaries of this licentious revelry, under the most fearful penalties. With these, and the like works of darkness, the disciples of Christ were to have no fellowship. The gospel which they professed to have embraced was a holy

religion. Its doctrines were to be openly proclaimed, and its ordinances to be publicly celebrated. Its aim was to detect, to expose and reprove the latent corruptions of the human heart; and thus to bring men, regenerated, out of darkness into marvellous light. Christianity is a system of spiritual light; it gives all needful instruction on religious subjects; and its professors should follow its dictates as faithful disciples of Him who "came a light into the world, that whoever believeth on him might not abide in darkness." Their conduct should always be such as to administer at least silent rebuke to those who "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

In concluding this lecture, allow me to press upon your notice the high and just claims of the religion we profess to our strict and uniform regard. Mingling, as we do, in business and social intercourse with men of the world, whose views and conduct are determined very much by custom and the influence of associates, we are in danger of forgetting the import of our holy vocation. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Familiarity with the ungodly is very apt to result in a conformity to their spirit, and a participation in their sinful practices. The world is governed, in great measure, by fashion and example; yet fashion is a fickle, undefinable thing, and all human example is imperfect. We have a more sure word of prophecy, a perfect and unchanging rule, to go by. Let us never lose sight of it. "The fashion of the world passeth away." It is a vain show, a fickle thing, an empty pageant; but the word of the Lord abideth for ever.

## LECTURE XXVI.

THE SLEEPER AROUSED TO THE IMPROVEMENT  
OF TIME.

EPHESIANS, V. 14—17.—Wherefore, he saith, awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light: see, then, that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil: wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

SLEEP and death are often used in Scripture to denote the natural insensibility of mankind to the importance of religious truth, and the duties which it enjoins. In sleep, our voluntary actions of body are suspended; and the few mental exercises which we have, are generally fanciful and incoherent. In death, the principle of life and motion forsakes its clay tenement, and the body, with all its curious mechanism, becomes as incapable of feeling or acting as the clods of the valley. To a sleeping or a dead man, you in vain exhibit the beauties of nature, or the sublime doctrines and solemn claims of religion. He neither sees, nor hears, nor feels the objects that are around him. Thus it is, in a qualified but awful sense, with those persons who have never been awakened by the Spirit of God, so as to perceive their need of a Saviour, and acknowledge the Redeemer's claims to their faith and obedience. Sin has blinded the understanding, stupified the conscience and perverted the affections of the heart, so that the rousing truths and alluring promises of the gospel have little or no salutary effect upon us, except when the external ministry of these truths and promises are accompanied by the gracious power of God upon the soul. The gospel declares that we are depraved and guilty creatures; and the truth of this declaration is confirmed and supported

by our own consciences; we feel, in some measure, that it is so. The gospel assures us, also, that, although we deserve to be punished for our sins, yet that God has provided a remedy; that he has laid our help on one who is mighty to save; that Christ Jesus has appeared in the flesh; that he has magnified the divine law; that he has voluntarily, and by consent of the insulted majesty of heaven, laid down his life a ransom for many; that thus a way has been opened for our return to holiness, to happiness and to God. The gospel message publishes forgiveness and eternal life to all who repent and submit to the Redeemer. It establishes the doctrine of immortality on a sure and solid basis; it leaves us in no doubt whether we are to exist and answer for our present conduct in a future state. It affirms positively that we must all appear at the judgment seat of Christ, and there be judged by him, according to the deeds done in the body. It informs us, moreover, that, until we lay hold of the hope which is set before us, and obtain a justifying interest in him who is exhibited in the New Testament as the Lord our righteousness, and the propitiation for our sins, we are in a state of condemnation, with the wrath of our Maker abiding on us. It assures us that Christ is the way, the truth and the life; and that there is no salvation in any other. This great salvation is offered on terms as easy and encouraging as heart could wish—without money and without price. We are only required to submit; to acknowledge our weakness and ill-desert, and fly to the arms of victorious grace; to be willing to be saved from our sins, and to the honour and glory of our Redeeming God. We have been accustomed to hear these things from our childhood; and most of us acknowledge their truth. But are there not some of us on whom these interesting representations have made but very slight impres-

sions? How can we account for this fact? It is owing to the sleep-inducing and death-like influence of sin. Our religious sensibilities are benumbed and paralysed. Buried in spiritual slumber; dead in trespasses and sins; indifferent alike to our danger and our remedy, the accents of truth and mercy fall upon the ear like water upon the rock.

Is it, then, a vain thing to preach and hear the word of the Lord? May we cease to attend upon the instituted means of instruction, and religious improvement? No: for though we are by nature deeply and awfully depraved, yet there is in us a susceptibility of religious impression; and to this susceptibility, or capacity of transformation in the spirit of our minds, God applies such means as he sees best and most consistent with our voluntary agency and accountableness. The truth of this remark is strikingly illustrated by what took place in the valley of vision, exhibited to the desponding mind of the prophet Ezekiel. What more unlikely, in human view, to be resuscitated, than dry, naked, and scattered bones? Yet, Ezekiel was commanded "to prophesy upon them; and say unto them, O, ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord:" and while he prophesied, and invoked the life-giving spirit of God, "the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." Ezek. xxxvii. And in our text, though men are supposed to be asleep unto spiritual death, yet they are called upon to awake, and arise. They are neither asleep nor dead, in a literal sense. They have eyes and ears capable of perceiving other objects. They have reason, conscience, and affection; and are, therefore, capable of reflection and forethought. They can judge of evidence, and discern the fitness and the obligations of duty. Hence the gospel addresses to them its commands and promises.



“Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead; and Christ shall give thee light.” Yes, God in the ministry of his word, speaks to you to-day, on a subject of infinite moment. Think not that your drowsiness or natural indifference to divine things furnishes any excuse for neglecting his counsels. In the Scripture just cited, and on which we comment, he tries upon you the joint force of a command and a promise; “Awake, arise: and Christ shall give you light.” It is your duty to shake off your sinful lethargy. It is Christ’s prerogative to give you light. Which takes place first; i. e., whether your rising, or Christ’s giving you light, be first in the order of time, is a question rather curious than useful. In my apprehension, they will be simultaneous; should the one ever take place, the other will take place at the same time. While Ezekiel prayed, and prophesied, and called upon the dry bones to hear the word of the Lord, the Spirit breathed upon them, and they lived. While Paul preached the word to Lydia of Thyatira, the Lord opened her heart, and she believed, and gave herself and her house up to Christ, in baptism. And thus it has been, in thousands of instances, since the apostolic age. Multitudes of sinners, pressed by the authority, encouraged by the promises, and aided by the Spirit of grace, have risen from darkness to light; and have come forth from the bondage of Satan, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. And, in the use of the same means, why may not we hope for the same blessings? I come to you as an ambassador of Christ. I know not who among you may be asleep or dead, in the sense of the text; but the word which I bring is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hear the command of Christ, therefore, all ye people, “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.” This command is good and righteous;

else, it would never have been uttered by him who knows our frame, and remembers that we are dust. Have any of you declined from your first love, grown remiss in duty, relapsed into a forbidden conformity to the world; and, in consequence, are involved in darkness respecting your interest in redeeming love? Awake, arise, come out from the world, and your God will receive you, and heal all your backslidings. Think of what Christ has done for you; and remember he is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." He gave you light, when you first believed on him; apply to him again; and, of his fulness you shall receive, "and grace for grace." Your deviations from the way of duty are dishonourable to your holy profession. You ought not to "sleep as do others." If you have been begotten again unto a lively hope, why should you linger about the place of the dead? Say with penitent David, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee!" Are any of you sleeping away your day of grace in a state of spiritual death? I bring to you the command of Christ, and I pray you, in his stead, hear it and regard it seriously. It is as obligatory on you as it was on the people of Ephesus to whom Paul addressed this epistle. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead." Consider for a moment, Christless reader, where you are, and in what circumstances. You press on the margin of the boundless ocean of eternity; and the frail bark in which you sleep will soon be afloat on the bosom of that vast abyss. Day after day quickly passing is incessantly abridging the little time allotted you to prepare for the interesting voyage; and yet you sleep on! You are conscious that you have sinned against God, and the Scripture assures you that as a transgressor you lie under the condemning sentence of his holy law; yet you are not seriously

inquiring how you may escape the execution of that sentence. You are taught in the Bible that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," yet you are not seeking that new heart, or cultivating those holy dispositions which correspond to the nature and the employments of heaven. Providence has placed you in circumstances which will certainly render you inexcusable in the day of judgment. You have been born and educated in a Christian land. You might have access to all those divine ordinances which constitute the means of our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. Salvation is brought very near to you. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so is the Son of man lifted up" in the preaching of the gospel, that whosoever believeth on him may not perish, but have everlasting life. How can you, why should you be careless in such solemn circumstances? When the Redeemer says, "Look unto me and be saved, ye ends of the earth;" and again, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," do you regard salvation unworthy of a look of faith, or one emotion of earnest and humble desire? What account will you be able to render of such negligence in the day of final retribution? But perhaps you will say you are in darkness, and having no light you cannot discern the excellent glory of the Saviour, and cannot, therefore, fix your heart and build your hopes upon him. Are you really sensible of your weakness and blindness? and do you take blame to yourself in this matter? Do you admit and feel the truth of the sacred oracle, "O, Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!" Is there, then, no help for you? Yea, saith the Spirit, "In me is thy help." Why not avail yourself of this help? It is surely sufficient; and no good reason can be assigned why you should not make it yours without delay. It is offered sin-

cerely and freely by a God of truth and love. Who among you will accept the gracious offer? Who will venture to reject it? Reader, bring these questions home to your own case, and consider well how much depends on a right decision. It is high time for you to awake out of sleep, and arise from the dead. Your life of probation is but as a vapour, and your spiritual apathy may terminate in the second death, from whose power there is no deliverance for ever. Listen again to the sure word of promise: "Christ shall give thee light." Believe this promise, and lay hold of the hope which it sets before you. If you feel and bewail your spiritual blindness, you can cry as did the son of Timeus in a similar case, "Son of David, have mercy on me." The petition of Bartimeus was granted; he received his sight, and walked forth in the path of duty, glorifying and praising God. And if you apply to the Redeemer with the same humility and earnestness he will grant your request; nay, he will do for you "exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think." O come to him, then, that you may have life. And having thus surrendered yourselves to his grace and guardianship, "See that ye walk circumspectly; not as fools, but as wise." To "walk circumspectly" is to live and act, not only with care and caution, so as to avoid evil, but accurately, i. e. with a sacred regard to the rules of Christian duty, so as to secure for ourselves and others, in a way that shall be well pleasing to God, the greatest amount of good that may be attained in a given time. Perhaps the practical import of the maxim may be given in the following general directions, viz.

1. Guard against temptation to sin. Withdraw from that company, avoid those places of resort, and abandon all those practices which have a tendency to alienate your heart from God, to render

you negligent of the sober and social duties of life, or to diminish your relish for the solemn and instituted exercises of religion.

2. Regard the hand of the Lord in the occurrences of every day. Habituate yourselves to recognise a wise and holy Providence in every event that takes place. Mark well those judgments of heaven that fall upon the community in which you live; endeavour to ascertain, and if possible, correct the public sins that procure them. In those events that bear upon yourselves, in your persons, families or fortunes, study and pray earnestly to know the interpretation, the meaning of Providence; and try to improve by it, so that all things wherewith you are exercised may conduce somewhat to your sanctification and holy submission to the divine will.

3. Improve with care and thankfulness your opportunities for growth in grace. Begin and end every day with God. Study your Bible. Visit your closet often. Keep the Sabbath so as to sanctify it. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." Let the season for public worship always find you in your place in the house of God. Neglect no ordinance of divine appointment; especially neglect not the sacraments of the New Testament. These wise and holy institutions have indubitable claims to your reverential regard. They make their appeal at once to your obedience and your gratitude. They have all the force of law, and all the attractive charms of commemorative symbols; impressive remembrancers of what has been done and suffered for our salvation.

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."—Time is one of the most precious commodities with which we are acquainted. On its proper use and improvement depend our happiness here and our heaven hereafter. Yet there is scarcely

any thing of which mankind are more prodigal. It is neglected or frittered away upon things not only useless, but hurtful to body and soul. In expounding this passage of holy writ, it is common for expositors to tell us that "to redeem time" is to gather useful lessons from that which is past, to make the best possible use of the present, and to form good resolutions in regard to that which we may yet enjoy. This comment conveys useful advice, but it does not seem to arise very naturally out of the text; at least it does not seem to comport well with the reason assigned in the close of the verse, "because the days are evil." Time is long enough for all the purposes for which it is given, provided we distribute or apportion it to the several objects which demand our attention, according to their relative importance. Religion is intended to mingle in and sanctify all our occupations and pursuits; but some of its duties require a temporary suspension of secular business. Such are the duties of the closet, family worship, attendance on the ministry of the word and public ordinances of the gospel, on prayer meetings, and occasional lectures for religious improvement, and various other meetings for the furtherance of the general cause of Christianity. These and the like services are enjoined upon us in the gospel, and yet our secular business, our temporal affairs, are not to be neglected. May not the apostle, therefore, by the phrase "redeeming the time," mean the gaining or the saving of it from one class of duties, that we may have a larger portion of it to bestow upon another class of a still higher order? But how is this to be accomplished? By diligence and order in the despatch of our several callings. Thus, for instance, if you wish time for closet and family devotions, without interfering with the business of the day, you must rise early. If you would keep the Sab-

bath holy, and be free from worldly cares in God's house, you must put your secular affairs in the most judicious posture that may be practicable before the Sabbath arrives. To gain time to attend an evening meeting for social worship, to visit the sick, or to go about doing good by encouraging the formation of societies, or collecting the means of supporting missions, or of carrying forward other designs of a charitable and benevolent nature, you have only to apply yourself with a little additional assiduity to the discharge of your other duties in their respective seasons. In this way you fairly and honestly buy off, or redeem time in small portions, and husband it for services which are strictly religious; and thus you evince the value which you put upon it by the sacrifices of personal ease and self-indulgence which you make for its redemption. The believers of Ephesus, many of them at least, had to make this purchase of time for the duties of their Christian profession at the expense of ease and worldly emolument not only, but of reputation and life. Hence we see the force and propriety of the expression, "because the days are evil." And although you are not openly persecuted for righteousness' sake, yet the days are still, in measure, evil; and if you would be active and useful in the cause of Christ, you must redeem time by exertions and sacrifices, painful indeed to flesh and blood, and foolish in the eye of worldly men, but which a true faith and a good hope in the Son of God will enable you to make with joy unspeakable and full of glory. In the final settlement of all temporal concerns, you will find that that portion of time, and that only has been well spent, which shall have been employed in advancing, directly or indirectly, the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."—A right know-

ledge of the Lord's will, a disposition to comply with it, and a desire that it may "be done on earth as it is in heaven," are the characteristics of genuine wisdom in man. All else, by whatever names called, or by whatever numbers sought and applauded, will be seen in the light of eternity with this inscription: "Weighed in the balances and found wanting."



## LECTURE XXVII.

### TEMPERANCE AND PSALMODY.

EPHESIANS, V. 18—20.—And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

DRUNKENNESS was a prevailing sin in Ephesus. Some of the idolatrous rites of the pagans countenanced it; particularly those which were celebrated in honour of Bacchus, the reputed god of wine. Plato, one of the gravest and most sensible philosophers of ancient Greece, taught that no man should be allowed to get drunk except at the solemnities of the god who presided over the wine, and revealed the art of preparing its exhilarating juices. And Plutarch says, that "when the people of Athens observed the orgies of Bacchus, or were present at his sacred mysteries, they allowed themselves to be delighted, even to drunkenness." Hence Aristotle and others conjecture, that the word *drunkenness* is derived from the intemperance in which the votaries of Bacchus indulged towards the conclusion of their great festivals. It was, therefore, natural for the apostle to warn the Christians of those times against a practice, the turpitude of which was in



some measure shielded by its connection with heathen rites of worship: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess." Excess, not only in the use of intoxicating liquor, but as a certain consequence, in various other evil passions and practices alike degrading and ruinous to mankind. Drunkenness is not a solitary sin. Its name is legion. It leads the van of a long train of associates whose aim and influence is inexpressibly malignant. Every man who gets drunk, puts in imminent jeopardy his health, his reputation, his fortune, the peace of his friends, and the salvation of his soul.

When Paul wrote this epistle, wine seems to have been the only species of inebriating liquor in use. Since then, many inventions have been found out which have contributed largely to facilitate and extend the evil forbidden in our text. We have in common and daily use, not only wine in such variety as to suit all tastes, but ardent spirits, rectified, diluted, sweetened, and cordialized to such an extent, that persons of all classes and circumstances may, if they choose, drink and be drunken, each in his own way and at his own price. All improvements of this sort are temptations; temptations to the indulgence of an appetite which, to say nothing of its baneful effects on men's spiritual interests, wastes annually more property than ever has been expended for the maintenance of religion and literature in any one year since the world began. I am not ignorant that intoxicating liquors may be used temperately, and without injury either to the consumer or to the community. But the habitual and immoderate use of them is beyond doubt a sin against God and nature; and we should in this matter particularly, let our moderation appear unto all men. Wine and malt liquor are to most people wholesome and pleasant drinks; but they are not necessaries of life; and as to all sorts of ardent

spirits, their proper place is the apothecary's shop; and their best, and perhaps only lawful use, is medicinal. Whether the distillation of bread-corn, and of those nutritious fruits, the apple and the peach, be not a perverting of an important portion of the fruits of the earth from the true design and intendment of the bounteous Creator, is a question which merits the serious consideration of the statesman, the philanthropist, and the Christian. Is it not distressing to the benevolent mind, to observe how large a share of the hard earnings of the labouring poor is spent in the gratification of an appetite, generated by habit, and always useless, if not pernicious, in its bearing on the interests of both worlds? Whatever may be the fact in other portions of the world, they who have paid any considerable attention to the subject will readily admit, that in this country intemperance is one of the chief causes of pauperism. Everything, therefore, that supplies facilities to a vice, which, so far as it prevails, invariably produces personal degradation, domestic wretchedness, and public expense, may be regarded, to say the least, as of questionable propriety. Let professing Christians set a good example in this important concern. For myself, I verily believe that the constant and free use of any kind of intoxicating beverage by persons in good health, cannot be justified on scriptural principles. The apostle Paul advised Timothy to take a little wine on account of his frequent infirmities; which clearly implies that it was to be used only as a medicinal auxiliary to frail nature in certain cases. To resort to artificial stimulants as a relief from the cares and troubles of life, is unwise and wicked. All such force upon nature, produces indirect debility of body and mind. It is probably in allusion to this well known fact, that Solomon says, "Wine is a mocker; strong drink is raging; and whoso-

ever is deceived thereby is not wise." Prov. xx. 1.

"But be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."

The Holy Spirit of God is the only true Comforter of fallen and miserable man. His consolations are permanent, free and all-sufficient; adapted to every possible case of affliction and sorrow that can be felt or feared. With these divine and soothing influences, we are, therefore, to seek to have our souls supported under all our troubles. Other reliefs are transient and illusory; these are lasting and substantial. And as we would enjoy these rich consolations of the Holy One, we must seek to obtain them in such way, and by the use of such means as God has appointed. They are not to be expected while we continue in sin, or in the habitual neglect of any known duty. The gospel terms on which we are authorized to hope for spiritual blessings are, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Let us not forget our need of the Divine Comforter; and let us be fully persuaded on the testimony of God, that his gracious operations are vouchsafed to frail and needy mortals through the merits and mediation of Christ. You may not indulge the idea of living a holy and happy life; of knowing your interest in redeeming love, or of dying a peaceful and triumphant death, unless you are filled with the Spirit. It is his prerogative to give you the light of spiritual life; to renew you in the temper of your minds; to convince you of your sin and weakness; to show you the excellent glory of the Redeemer; to persuade and enable you to repose a believing and firm confidence in him. It is his office to help your infirmities; to elevate your affec-

tions ; to bind up your broken hearts ; to pour into your disconsolate bosoms the balm of Gilead ; to lead you by the still waters, and into the green pastures of the ransomed flock. It is his to make your attendance on the ministry of the word and ordinances of God's house, the effectual means of your spiritual strength and progress in the divine life. Joy in the Holy Ghost is a precious and important principle in the kingdom of heaven. Seek this joy ; and you are encouraged to expect it. You know who has said, " If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ! "

With a view to cherish the sacred influences of the Spirit, and give utterance to the religious pleasures with which he fills the soul, we are directed to use psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. The heathen were in the habit of singing profane and impure songs in some of their idolatrous festivals. This was particularly the case in the worship of Bacchus, and of Diana of the Ephesians. Instead of these indecent and coarse odes, designed to gratify lust and honour idols, the apostle taught the Christians of those times to sing psalms and hymns, composed on evangelical subjects, and in honour of the true God. And this piece of advice, though drawn from the apostle by peculiar circumstances, is nevertheless of general use and application. What are called fashionable songs of our times, cannot, perhaps, be called idolatrous, excepting such as have been composed to celebrate the praises of angels or canonized saints ; but really they are not generally favourable to moral and religious improvement. Most of them are senseless ; and some, that are often sung, and by a certain description of people, much admired, are immoral and of bad tendency. Love songs are for the most part fulsome,

and offensive to delicacy and true refinement. Even patriotic songs, which are usually the best, abound in the praises of fortune or the flattery of great men, to a degree which often borders very closely on a kind of modified and elegant idolatry. The singing of Jehovah's praise is a branch of his instituted worship; and we should be careful not to deprive him who made us of any part of the honour which is due to his holy name. For this delightful part of worship we are furnished in Scripture with ample and appropriate matter. The book of Psalms, chiefly written by David, is a rich and inestimable treasure. "Composed upon particular occasions," says the pious Bishop Horne, "yet designed for general use; delivered out as services for Israelites under the law, yet no less adapted to the circumstances of Christians under the gospel; they present religion to us in the most engaging dress; communicating truths which philosophy could never investigate, in a style which poetry can never equal; while history is made the vehicle of prophecy, and creation lends all its charms to paint the glories of redemption. Calculated alike to profit and to please, they inform the understanding, elevate the affections, and entertain the imagination. Indited under the influence of Him to whom all hearts are known, and all events foreknown, they suit mankind in all situations, grateful as the manna which descended from above, and conformed itself to every palate. The fairest productions of human wit, after a few perusals, like gathered flowers, wither in our hands and lose their fragrance; but these unfading plants of paradise become, as we are accustomed to them, still more and more beautiful: their bloom appears to be daily heightened; fresh odours are emitted, and new sweets extracted from them. He who has once tasted their excellencies, will desire to taste them yet again; and he who

tastes them oftenest will relish them best.”—*Pref. to Com.*

“Hymns and spiritual songs.”—By these I understand short pieces, grounded on portions of Holy Scripture, adapted to particular occasions, and expressive of gratitude to God for his great mercies. How strange it is that some Christians object to the use of such compositions in religious worship! Can it be doubted, in the face of our text, that the Christians of Ephesus used hymns and spiritual songs? And did they not do so under the sanction and by the advice of Paul the apostle? That hymns or spiritual songs, bottomed on the word of God, whether a versified exposition of a particular passage or a condensed exhibition of gospel truth taken from various passages and clothed in decent and serious language, may be sung in divine worship, whether public or private, appears to me perfectly obvious and incontestable. Yet it is a curious fact that many Christian congregations, and some, too, in our own connexion, have conscientious scruples on this subject. The chaste and evangelical compositions of Dr. Watts, as well his rich and beautiful version of the Psalms as his highly devotional hymns and spiritual songs, are denounced and excluded from the sanctuary, while the miserable doggerel of Rouse is sung or attempted to be sung, to the no small annoyance of all correct taste for the harmony of numbers, or the charms of music. But happily for the Church, this prejudice is yielding by little and little to the force of evidence, and will ere long give place entirely to more rational and liberal views.

“Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.—The melody of the heart to the Lord! This is the essence of genuine and acceptable praise. Sound sentiments, good poetry and fine music are but the apparatus; this is the principle:

those are the outward and sensible helps; this the inward and spiritual grace. Let us note it well, and recollect it, whenever we lift up our voices to laud and magnify the name and the mercy of the most High. Our Maker requires us to worship him, in spirit and in truth. The form, the manner, the time, and the place, except so far as these are prescribed by the written rule of faith and practice, are circumstantial, variable, discretionary; but the melody of the heart, the devotion of the soul to the Great Father of spirits, is the one thing needful, and indispensable in every act of acceptable worship. Our God looks at the heart; this he claims, and where this is not yielded, no sacrifice, however decent in its exterior, or however expensive in its kind, can be of any saving avail. In concluding this lecture, I cannot but notice with regret, that the use of psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, is too much neglected, even by some who have been baptized into Christ, and hope to sing the song of triumph in Heaven. Why should we neglect any of those means which are favourable to our growth in grace, and joy in the Holy Ghost? The chanting of spiritual songs, even in solitude, has been practised by some, and found greatly conducive to religious peace and heavenly-mindedness. And, in our family devotions, what can be better calculated to enliven the exercise, or to interest the younger members of our households? Were the worship of God celebrated in all our families, and were singing a psalm or hymn made a part of that worship, sure I am, that singing in the house of God would not be confined as it now is to perhaps less than half our congregations. This is deplorable, and it indicates a low and languid state of religion among us. How animating it would be, if all who meet for worship were constrained by the love of God to join in singing his high praises! And, are

we not alike under obligations to him who gives us all things richly to enjoy? Why, then, do you not all unite, in the grateful and seasonable service? Perhaps you will say, you have no skill in music. But have you taken any pains to make yourselves acquainted with what God requires you to practise? Really, I fear some of you have not considered this matter as seriously as it deserves. If you can sing a song of any kind, you are solemnly bound, as you entertain the hope of a Christian, to sing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. Some, I am aware, cannot sing; and of such the formal act is, of course, not required. Yet every worshipper should have his psalm-book; and, with his eye upon the matter sung, and his heart lifted up to the glorious object of praise, he should endeavour to join in spirit, if he cannot in voice. "Praise ye the Lord, for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely." Psalm cxlvii.

"Giving thanks always, for all things, unto God, even the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."—God, the living and only true God, and the only proper object of religious praise is the Father, the source, the giver of all good. He is, therefore entitled always, and in all our changing circumstances, to our devout and grateful thanksgiving. "For all things"—chastisements, crosses, and disappointments, as well as what we commonly call blessings, or benefits. Here is a point on which Christians very generally fail to act worthy of their high vocation. We forget that many things are good for us in the long run, that are not agreeable at present. The health of the soul, like that of the body, often requires medicinal and painful applications. We forget the exhortation that speaketh unto us as unto children: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint



when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." We have a sure word of promise, which engages that all things work together for good to them that love God. Let us bear this in mind, and we shall have occasion always to give thanks to God for all things wherewith we are exercised, whether prosperous or adverse. And this perpetual offering of thanks is to be "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." The mediatorship of Jesus Christ is the only channel of communication between Heaven and earth. 'This idea pervades the sacred Scriptures. When God bestows favours on fallen man it is through the merits of the Redeemer; and our poor, imperfect services come up before the Most High, through the same blessed and gracious medium. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me," says our adorable Saviour. Let our hearts be deeply impressed with this sentiment in all our acts of worship. In our persons and services, we have access to the Father, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ:" To whom be glory for ever!

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## LECTURE XXVIII.

### THE MARRIAGE RELATION.

EPHESIANS, V. 21—33.—Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but

that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself: and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

By the appointment of Divine Providence, mankind sustain to one another various relations; and from these relations result most of the duties, as well as a large share of the comforts of social life. This appointment is obviously wise and good. In a community of rational and dependent beings, government and subordination, mutual forbearance and reciprocal kindness are indispensable to peace and happiness. Considerations merely selfish may, therefore, influence us to pay some attention to our relative duties. But we ought to perform them from higher motives. We ought, as directed in the text, to "submit ourselves one to another in the fear of God." Nothing short of the fear of God, i. e., a reverential regard to his authority, a solemn sense of our responsibility to him for the deeds done in the body, connected with a reliance on the aids of his grace, can secure a steady and faithful discharge of those offices of duty and affection which we owe to each other, as superiors, inferiors, and equals.

The relation to which our attention is particularly invited by the subject of the present lecture, is that of husband and wife. There needs no apology for introducing such a topic as this to the attention of Christian readers. That is a false and criminal delicacy which refuses to listen, with candour and seriousness, to any subject presented to our notice in

the sacred Scripture. The matrimonial relation has high claims to our respect and veneration, whether we consider its origin, its antiquity, or its benign influence on the best interests of human society. The common parents of our race were joined in holy wedlock by the Creator himself; who then promulgated a law which is to continue in force till the end of time: "Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they two shall be one flesh." Gen. ii. 24. Our Saviour gave his unequivocal sanction to the institution, by attending a marriage in Cana of Galilee, where he manifested his glory, and exhibited his infinite power by turning water into wine. John ii. 1, &c. These facts, taken in connexion with many passages in the apostolic writings, prove beyond doubt, that the institution is of divine origin. Its beneficial influence on the general state of society must be seen and acknowledged by every one who is, in any measure, acquainted with men and manners. This is further evident, from the importance which is attached to the subject in the Bible. The violation of the marriage covenant is expressly forbidden in one of the commands of the Decalogue. Of adulterers, and other violators of the seventh commandment, it is declared in the New Testament, that they shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. The utility of the institution may be fairly inferred, therefore, from the solemn manner in which its sanctity is guarded by the beneficent Ruler and righteous Judge of the world.

In the portion of sacred Scripture which forms the basis of this lecture, the marriage relation is represented in a manner which places its dignity and sacredness in a very interesting and impressive point of view. Its nature is illustrated, and its duties are enforced by considerations drawn from the relation

which subsists between Christ and his church. As Christ is the head of the Church ; so the husband is the head of the wife. As the Church is subject to Christ ; so ought the wife to be to her husband, in everything lawful. Christ loved the Church and gave his life for her salvation ; so ought husbands to love their wives. Christ regards the Church as his body ; bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh ; thus the husband is to cherish and protect his wife, not merely as his friend, but as a part of his own body ; for they are one flesh. Can you conceive of any way in which the subject now before us could have been invested with so much interest as the apostle has given to it, by this comparison ! That surely cannot be a capricious or unimportant relation, which the Spirit of God sees fit to compare with the divinely constituted union between the Redeemer and his mystical body, his blood-bought Church. We are not to imagine then, that the duties of this relation may be neglected with impunity. I need scarcely remark that the connexion is the most intimate and endearing that exists among mankind. It supposes a oneness of interests and affections, a reciprocity of confidence and kind offices, which has no parallel, excepting that which obtains between Jesus Christ and his ransomed people.

But in every community, however small the number of its members, subordination is needful ; so needful, that without it, there can be no order, and order has been fitly styled "Heaven's first law." Every family is a little kingdom, and no kingdom can prosper without a head, one head, and but one, at one and the same time. Hence, says Paul, "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." It is the Lord's will that you should do so. It is an ordinance of long standing, and of well tried fitness and utility. It is adapted to your characteristic weakness, and

to the useful purposes which you were intended to answer in society. The submission demanded is moreover for your comfort. You are made of refined and delicate materials. Eve was fashioned out of a rib taken from her husband's side. You are not well calculated to encounter the hardships of government, of commerce, of agriculture, and the arts. Your merciful Creator has therefore laid the scene of your activity chiefly within the domestic circle. Here, by divine grace, you may act your part well; here you may be useful and happy; here you have a fair and indubitable claim to be esteemed and honoured according to your moral worth, and in proportion to the fidelity with which you perform the duties of your station.

“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church; and he is the Saviour of the body.”—Here you have the reason assigned for that subjection to your husbands which is demanded of you. The husband is by divine right the head; but his authority over you resembles the headship of Christ in relation to the Church. Now Christ's government is not only righteous, but mild and merciful; adapted to the frailties of his people, and designed for their good. He governs that he may save; for he is the Saviour of his mystical body.

“Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands, in every thing.” The Church rejoices in being subject to her Lord. The children of Zion are joyful in their King. Evangelical obedience is not constrained and servile, but voluntary and cheerful. It is the effect of love founded on a discernment of the Redeemer's excellence. Hence his yoke is easy, his burden light, his service freedom. His commands are not grievous. They are holy, just, and good; and in keeping them there is great reward. In a

similar manner, and from like principles, should "wives be subject to their own husbands in every thing." But is there no limitation to the subjection required? May not the husband play the tyrant? and in such a case, may not obedience be rightfully refused? In answer to this inquiry, which is quite natural and reasonable, let it be observed, that the expression "in every thing," which would seem, at first view, to leave the wife no liberty of judging for herself in any case, is, according to the rules of interpretation, limited by the comparative particles *as* and *so*; and also by the nature of the case. As the subjection of the wife is to resemble that of the Church, so the government of the husband is to resemble that of Christ. Subjection is required "in every thing" that is good and right in itself and in all its bearings. The husband's authority is delegated, and subordinate to the law, or will of the supreme Law-Giver. He has no right to exact any thing that is unreasonable or unkind. He may not encroach on the rights of conscience. Should he take it into his head to impose on his wife the whole care and toil of providing for the family, she is not obliged to comply with his wishes, because they are unlawful. Should he be profligate, or disposed to dishonesty, and demand the concurrence and aid of his wife in gratifying his bad passions, and in defrauding his neighbour, she may refuse; she must refuse subjection to his will, because she is under a superior and eternal obligation to fear God and keep his commandments. Should a husband be a scoffer at religion, and forbid his wife to read the Bible, to attend on the ministry of the gospel, or other means of religious improvement, she may not comply with his demand; because in all such cases he assumes more than is comprised in his delegated authority. The claims of truth and conscience are paramount. In

matters of religion every person who has attained to the age of discretion must act and answer for himself. The wife has an unalienable right of private judgment in her own personal concerns; especially in religious concerns. She has also a fair claim to be consulted in matters of a domestic character, which relate to the welfare of the family. Yet in the exercise of these rights, a Christian woman will manifest great meekness, and evince a tender regard for the honour and happiness of her husband. She will do nothing through strife or vain glory. She will be contented with the station which Providence has assigned her. She will mark and ponder well the sacred oracle, which says: "And the woman who hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him:—For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?" 1 Cor. vii.

But the duties of the conjugal relation are reciprocal. We have hitherto been considering those of the one party; here follows a concise description of what belongs to the other:

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Take notice, husbands, that you are directed not to exert your utmost authority over your wives—not to govern them with rigour, to watch them with a jealous eye, to treat their opinions with contempt, or to cross their reasonable wishes; but to love them. This article of your instructions corresponds to that which requires their subjection. The government in domestic society, like that which exists in the kingdom of Christ, is to be a govern-

ment of love. Love, in both cases, is the fulfilling of the law, in each respectively. Coercion may break the heart; but love captivates, wins, and secures the affections thoroughly and permanently. This noble principle delights to serve and honour its object. The obedience which it renders is cordial, voluntary, and generous. If you would have your wives in due subjection, secure their esteem and confidence; and the best way to accomplish this is to love them, and act towards them in a manner that shall demonstrate that your love is not in word only, but "in deed and in truth." In this, Christ is to be your model. As he loved the Church, so, in your humble measure, you are to love your wives. How, then, did Christ show his love to the Church? He gave himself for her. He disrobed himself for a time of his visible majesty. He pitied her in her weak and helpless condition; threw himself between her and the pains of eternal death. By the sacrifice of his blood he procured for her the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Through the medium of his word he made known to her the tidings of grace and salvation; gave her wholesome counsels, animating promises, and perfected his strength in her weakness. And thus he continues to do her good, notwithstanding her many failings; and thus he will manifest his kind regard for her, till she shall be brought, all glorious and without spot, to the palace of the King eternal, as the bride, the Lamb's wife, whose Maker, Jehovah Jesus, is her husband. Rev. xxi. 9; Isa. liv. 5.

Let this high and holy example be ever before our eyes. We cannot, indeed, equal it; but, by the help of divine grace, we can and must imitate it, or forfeit all just claim to the Christian character. The frailties and imperfections of our friends do not free us from our obligation to love them, and en-



deavour to do them good. Nor are we to withdraw our affections from them, or remit our exertions for their comfort and welfare on account of any difficulties or discouragements that may meet us in the discharge of our duty towards them. The weaker vessels particularly, are entitled to tender treatment. The man who treats his wife with coolness, who does not aim to soothe her sorrows, who needlessly withdraws from her society, or, when with her, watches for opportunities to mortify her in public or to chide her in private; in a word, who does not uniformly and in all circumstances minister to her honour and happiness to the extent of his ability, sins against nature, contemns the example of Christ, and violates the law of marriage.

“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies; he that loveth his wife loveth himself: for no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” The intimacy of the union is here alleged as an additional reason why men should love their wives. The argument stands thus: Christ, that he might perform the office of mediator, took human nature into personal union with the eternal word; so that while believers regard him in respect to his divinity as their redeeming Lord, they can also contemplate him, in respect to the nature which he assumed, as their near kinsman—“bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh.” This union between Christ and his people is spiritual; and to our present limited discernment, incomprehensible; yet it is real, it is intimate, it is indissoluble; inso-much that the Redeemer’s glory and the safety of his Church are identical. He cherishes and protects her; and she honours him by reposing in him entire, undivided, and unwavering confidence. In like manner, though in an inferior sense, the marriage

relation involves a union of interests and feelings so intimate, that he who disregards or abuses his wife, acts a part as wicked as if he were to neglect or lacerate his own body.

“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife; and they two shall be one flesh; this is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.”

On this passage we may remark: First, that conjugal affection is to have the precedency of filial love; though the latter is to be cherished and manifested in its due proportion with religious care and unwearied perseverance. Secondly: Marriage, according to the divine law, is the union of two persons, and two only, one of each sex, at the same time. “They two”—not they three or more. Polygamy has been practised; but it has always been sinful; contrary to the law of God, and a departure from the design of nature; as has generally appeared in its ill effects on domestic comfort and public manners. Thirdly: “This is a great mystery,” is the principal text from which the Church of Rome draws the conclusion that marriage is a sacrament. To transform a relation between two human beings into a sacrament, must, one would think, require much the same skill in interpretation, as that by which the symbols in the Lord’s supper are transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ. The fact is, as Paul tells us, the “great mystery” relates to the connexion between Christ and the Church; or, as some ingenious expositors think, to a typical allusion which the creation of the first woman and her marriage with the first man had to the redemption of the Church, and its mystical union to the Redeemer.

“Nevertheless, or rather therefore, let every one of you in particular so love his wife, even as himself: and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”

## LECTURE XXIX.

## RECIPROCAL DUTIES OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

EPHESIANS, VI. 1—4.—Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. Honour thy father and mother, (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

NEXT to the relation of husband and wife, that of parent and child is the most important to the happiness of families, and the general welfare of human society that exists among mankind. The principles imbibed, and the habits formed within the domestic circle, are very apt to go with us into the more public walks of life. Children that are obliging and docile at home, will probably manifest these amiable dispositions at school, and in all their subsequent movements. The same observation holds true of parents. Those who are upright, placable, and pleasant in the treatment of their households, will ordinarily be good neighbours, fair dealers, and useful citizens. A church, composed of religious and well regulated families, could not fail to grow and prosper: and a nation's true glory may be estimated by the number of such nurseries of piety and good morals which it comprises within its limits.

Accordingly, the duties of this relation are pointed out and enforced in holy Scripture, in a very plain and impressive manner. In attending to the subject we shall pursue the apostle's method, and endeavour to ascertain the meaning of his instructions. First, as they are addressed to children; and, secondly, as they prescribe the duty of parents.

The duty of children is marked out here by two forms of expression, viz: "Children obey your

parents in the Lord;" and, "Honour thy father and mother." The only difference between these two expressions is, that the one is a little more extended in its import than the other. The former relates particularly to young children while immediately under the parental wing, and entirely dependent on the care and bounty of their natural benefactors. The latter is applicable to all whose parents are living, or who have any knowledge of their fathers and mothers; and seems designed to teach us, that we owe kind and soothing attentions to them while they and we live; and that we should, after their decease, revere their memory, and guard it if possible from unjust and injurious aspersions.

Let us examine these general ideas a little more minutely. And here, I earnestly request the attention of little children. It is with a view to their benefit, chiefly, that this article has been prepared: "Children, obey your parents, in the Lord; for this is right." Dear little ones, you read God's holy Bible to learn your duty, to learn what your Heavenly Father would have you to do; how he would have you to act, that you may please him and be happy in this world, and in that which is to come. Now God speaks to you, in the reading and preaching of his gospel: and you should listen seriously to his instructions, and look up to him with strong desires, that he would grant you grace to keep his commandments. He speaks to you in this passage of his word, on a subject intimately connected with your duty and your happiness. Hear what he says: "Children, obey your parents, in the Lord; for this is right." Here is a duty which you can easily understand. You know your parents, and you know what is meant by obeying them. To obey them, "in the Lord," means that you should obey them in the fear of the Lord; because he has required you so to do; because you live, and move,

and have your being in him; and he is, therefore, acquainted with all your conduct. He is pleased with you when you do well, and displeased with you when you do wrong. Now, you always do wrong when you disobey your parents, unless their commands should be contrary to the divine will, (a matter in which they are more capable of judging than you can be, while you are children). Remember, then, dear children, if you disobey your parents, you break God's holy command, and are wicked; and God has told us in Scripture, "that he is angry with the wicked every day;" and that, if they continue in their wickedness till they die, he will severely punish them in hell, that awful place of torment, which is prepared for the devil and his angels.

The apostle Paul further tells you, that it is fit and proper that you should obey your parents. "Children," says he, "obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right." As if he had said—it is a righteous command. It is a debt of gratitude and respect due to those to whom, under God, you owe your being; and on whom you depend for food and raiment, for instruction, and protection amidst a thousand dangers. No creatures on earth are so entirely helpless, or so long dependent on their parents as you are. When you first come into the world, you can do nothing but cry; and you would all have died almost as soon as you were born, had it not been for the care and kindness of your parents and other friends. Your mothers nourished you with the substance of their own bodies, or with other food nicely suited to your tender age. For many months, while you could neither sit nor stand, nor in any degree help yourselves, you were almost constantly in their arms. You have occasioned them many a tear of sympathy, many a toilsome day of care, and many a sleepless night of

which you have now no recollection. And since you have learned to walk, and speak, and pursue your little studies and amusements, the chief earthly concern of both your parents, if both are living, has been to guard you from evil, and provide for your safety and happiness. And will you not be thankful for such unwearied kindness? for such laborious and disinterested endeavours to promote your welfare? You can never fully repay them for their acts of love towards you; but you can be grateful to them, you can love them, you can respect their authority, and make them happy, by following their advice, by paying a strict regard to God's commands, and by doing those things which are lovely and of good report, as you are taught in the Holy Scriptures. It is right, children, to obey your parents. And if you do not try to please and obey them, you not only grieve them and give them great distress, but you sin against God, and prove yourselves more foolish and perverse than any other young creatures with which we are acquainted. Did you ever notice a flock of chickens? See how closely they follow their mother! How speedily they come when she calls them! And when she warns them of danger, how they fly to the shelter of her wings! God has taught the chickens to act in this manner; and in his holy word he has taught you to obey your parents. And will you permit these little insignificant fowls to outdo you in filial duty, and in fulfilling the law of the Creator? No, surely, unless you are willing to be despised by good people, and are determined to walk in the ways of sin and everlasting ruin. Then, "obey your parents, in the Lord; for this is right." It is well-pleasing to your Heavenly Father; it is fit and proper, on account of your inexperience and ignorance of the world; it is proper because of your dependent circumstances, and great

obligations to your fathers and mothers, your natural guardians, and best friends.

“Honour thy father and mother, (which is the first commandment with promise,) that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth.” This, you will observe, is a quotation from Exodus, xx. 12, with a very short comment, and a slight variation in the language which Paul, as an inspired writer, had an unquestionable right to make. It is in substance, the fifth in numerical order, of those commandments which God gave to the Israelites at Mount Sinai, by the ministry of Moses. It enjoins the same duty as the verse we have just been considering; somewhat extended however in its compass. It is the first of what are called the second table of precepts, which prescribe our relative or moral duties. It is also the first, and indeed the only commandment of the Decalogue to which a special promise is annexed. “Honour thy father and mother.” Thus far the citation is verbatim. The parenthesis contains a remark of the apostle; and of the latter clause of the precept as it stands in Exodus, “that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee,” he gives the sense without local reference, and as it applies to all ages of the Church—“That it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth.” Children honour their parents by obeying them; but the same thing may and ought to be done in various other ways; as first, by treating them, and speaking to them on all occasions with due respect and reverence. And this is a point in which many children fail. Not only those that are quite young, but some whose years and observation might have taught them better, are often seen to treat their parents with a degree of rudeness and indecorum, which clearly bespeaks a great want of moral refinement and filial piety.

For a child, though he should be full grown, and whatever may be his mental attainments, to contradict a parent rashly, or to show a reluctance to comply with a parent's reasonable wishes, is clearly a violation of the fifth commandment; and an unequivocal indication of a disingenuous and unhappy temper.

Secondly: Parents are honoured by our confiding in their opinions, so far, at least, as to ask their advice on all important subjects; such as the company which it may be proper for us to keep, what occupations we should select, what amusements may be safely indulged in, what religious and matrimonial connexions we should form. In these and the like concerns, young people should seek and weigh well the suggestions and counsels of their parents; and in the absence of parents, they should, as they would act wisely, consult other experienced and judicious friends.

Thirdly: Parents are honoured by contributing to their maintenance, when they are poor; or, to their comfort, otherwise, when they become aged or infirm. Yes, you can never bring your parents indebted to you in matters of this kind. Though you may have families of your own; and though you may earn your bread by the sweat of your brow, still you are solemnly bound, by the law of God and nature, to share your comforts and your time with your infirm or afflicted parents. The service may be difficult—it may require some patience and self-denial; but it is a duty, second in importance only to that of piety to your Maker. Have any of you a parent in afflicted circumstances? Be not weary of serving him. Recollect your own childhood; your many years of entire dependence on parental watchings, toils and patient care. Consider, also, that he probably spent his strength, and lost his health in providing for your comfort. If Providence



has placed him in your care for a little season, you will surely minister to his comforts, in turn, cheerfully, and to the extent of your ability. In this way you may give decisive evidence that you cherish a grateful remembrance of favours long since received, and prove that you delight to honour your father and mother, agreeably to the voice of nature, sanctioned by Heaven's high and holy command.

“That it may be with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth.”—This, in Paul's phraseology, is the promise annexed to the command now under consideration. Concerning this promise, I would observe very briefly, that it is to be interpreted like most other scriptural promises, by the analogy of faith, and as expressing a part of that great and gracious scheme, by which God blesses and saves sinners. A blessing is connected in this, as in other instances, with the faithful discharge of our duty. Believe, repent, obey God, forsake sin, and follow after holiness, “that it may be well with thee,” is agreeable to the general tenor of Scripture. As to the latter clause of this promise, “and that thou mayest live long on the earth,” I do not think it warrants the dutiful child to expect that God will work miracles to preserve his life beyond the ordinary age of man. The length of human life, may, without any extravagant fancy, be measured by the happiness enjoyed and the good that is secured during its continuance. On this estimate every good man may be said to live longer on the earth than his wicked neighbour. Yet, experience and observation will perhaps bear us out in saying, that filial piety is generally connected with other good qualities and habits, which have a favourable tendency to promote prosperity and long life, in a literal sense. Vicious indulgences have occasioned thousands of premature deaths. And the young person who is known to have been disobedient and

unkind to parents, is not the most likely to be esteemed and advanced to stations of respectability and emolument in society. In the New Testament we find such sayings as the following, which accord with the promise before us, and seem to afford some support to the opinion just mentioned, as its probable import: "He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile;—for the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." 1 Peter, iii. 10, &c. "Godliness is profitable unto all things; having promise of the the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Tim. iv. 8.

Thus much for the duty of children, and the considerations as suggested in the text, by which that duty is enforced. And now, beloved youth, before we pass to the other side of our subject, let me collect into a small compass what has been said, and beg you to remember it, and try to improve by it. Your early sentiments and habits will be likely to cleave to you through life, perhaps through eternity. It is, therefore, of great moment that these should be amiable and correct. You have heard that you should obey and honour your parents, in the Lord: that is, agreeably to the Lord's will and appointment, and because it is right—i. e. fit and proper that you should do so; it is a suitable expression of gratitude to your best friends, a becoming acknowledgment of your obligations and need of parental kindness, instruction and control. You have been reminded that inferior animals, guided by instinct, obey and believe the voice of their parents;—that if you are refractory and self-willed, you will prove yourselves more foolish than the chickens, and less disposed than they are to fulfil the intentions of the Creator. You have been taught that you should

honour your parents, not only by obeying them, but by treating them with due respect—by asking their advice and consulting their wishes on all important subjects; and by doing everything in your power to relieve their wants or lighten their sorrows when they are poor, aged, or in any way afflicted. And, finally, you have seen that to a faithful performance of these duties God has promised a blessing. Dutiful children shall, in general, be more esteemed, more prosperous, and more happy than those of the opposite character, as well in the life that now is, as in that which is to come: to which, I now add one passage of sacred Scripture, of very awful import; you may find it in Proverbs, xxx. 17. “The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.”

“And ye, fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

On this branch of the subject, our exposition shall be concise; and as comprehensive and practical as possible. Fathers only are named here; but it is not to be supposed that mothers are exempted from the duty enjoined. Fathers, indeed, from their headship in the family, are under special obligations to be foremost in this arduous labour. But mothers are to be helps-meet in this, as in all other matters connected with the conjugal relation.

In the first clause of this verse, our duty is prescribed negatively: “Provoke not your children to wrath.” That is, as I understand it, do not discourage, dishearten, and disgust them, by requiring too much at their hands; by imposing upon them tasks and restraints which are unreasonable, or ill-adapted to their age and ability; do not offend their growing sense of justice, by refusing them suitable time and opportunity for recreation, or by withhold-

ing from them promised rewards, and due commendation when their conduct has been praiseworthy; do not break their spirits and destroy their ambition by scolding, correcting and governing too much; do not indulge passion, or discover a spirit of retaliation, in correcting their faults; especially, do not let moroseness and over-strained rigour mark your countenance and your conduct when you aim to lead them to God, in the peaceful and pleasant ways of religion.

This negative part of the business is of more consequence than one would suspect at first view. In attempting too much, we may fail to accomplish what might be done, on a more moderate scale and by more gentle methods. One of the grand secrets of training youth to usefulness and duty, is a judicious adaptation of means to their several capacities and dispositions. Little and often—strict but reasonable—sweet in manner, but firm and uniform in fact, are maxims of experience, and great practical efficiency. Many a child has been deprived of self-respect, and beaten into a dunce, because he did not possess the natural talents of some of his school-mates. And it is quite probable that some young people have imbibed strong prejudices against the gospel of Christ, from the harsh and forbidding, though, no doubt, well-meant methods that may have been employed to make them sensible of their sin and danger, while in a thoughtless or unregenerate state.

In the matter of instruction, the intellectual appetite, or the religious taste may be so overcharged as to create a loathing of its best and most needful nutriment; and in government, the cords of discipline, when drawn too tight, lose their elasticity and all their salutary effect. But to proceed:

“Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Between the terms “nurture” and “admonition” as used in this connexion, there may

be a shade of difference; but it is so slight that its detection would scarcely be worth a criticism. When we are directed to bring up our children, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, the meaning obviously is, that we should educate them religiously; that we should give them a Christian education; which, in my view, includes these three things, viz: Dedication, instruction, and government.

1. Dedication.—This consists in devoting our offspring to God, in the way which he has prescribed in his word: That is, according to our understanding of Scripture, by baptism. Here, a religious education ought to commence; and this first public and solemn act should be performed, so soon as the mother and the infant are able to appear with safety in the house of God. Many parents defer this duty too long; and some have had reason, in consequence of their childrens' unexpected death, to blame themselves for their negligence. We are far from intimating that unbaptized infants are lost; but if they die without the ordinance of initiation into the visible kingdom of Christ, either through the disqualification or dilatoriness of parents, such parents are to be blamed, and must, if their consciences be tender and faithful, experience some self-reproach, on reflecting on a past opportunity that can never be recalled.

2. Instruction.—This is to be begun as soon as practicable; the sooner the better after the child begins to think and gather ideas; and the work is to be continued, "line upon line, and precept on precept," with such modification and enlargement of the plan as may suit the growing capacity and mental powers of the pupil. The work of teaching is not soon done. As the block of marble is brought to its proper size and symmetry, by a nice and long continued use of the chisel, so the infant

mind is to be informed and moulded aright, not by a few hasty efforts, but by years of patient and skilful training. The matter to be taught is various. The facts of sacred history, and the most prominent doctrines of Christianity are entitled to primary attention: and the grand object must be to make the child acquainted with himself, and bring him to love the good Shepherd, who carries the lambs in his bosom, and feeds his flock with the heavenly manna. Our precepts are to be enforced and exemplified by a life of uniform and consistent devotion; a life, which shall evince more clearly than words can do, that we regard religion as the one thing needful.

3. Government.—This is to begin while the child is yet on its mother's breast. It is to be mild, and to be administered in love; but its regular and strict administration is of great consequence. Correction, not punishment; the salvation of the child, not the gratification of the parent's passion, is the true and only legitimate end of parental authority. A government of mere force is despotism, alike degrading in its influence on the subject, and anti-christian in its spirit, and in its measures.

Finally: after our utmost endeavours, we are to feel and acknowledge that our sufficiency in this great work is of God. In this, as in the Christian ministry, Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase. Let our daily and fervent prayers, with and for our children, bear witness to our firm persuasion of this awful, yet delightful truth.

## LECTURE XXX.

## MASTERS AND SERVANTS.

EPHESIANS, VI. 5—9.—Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart: with good will, doing service as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your Master also is in heaven: neither is there respect of persons with him.

THE sacred Scriptures furnish instructions to persons in all relations and circumstances of life. This is one of the great excellencies of the inspired oracles. Here the rich are taught to be humble, and to abound in acts of charity; and the poor are directed to be content with the allotments of Providence, remembering that man's happiness consists not in what he has, but in what he is in himself and in relation to his Redeemer. Here the servant is urged to a faithful performance of his duty, as seeing him who is invisible: and the master is reminded that there is One in heaven, with whom there is no respect of persons.

As Christianity was first promulgated in a country where slavery was practised, and sanctioned by the laws of the State, its divine author deemed it inexpedient to interpose his authority for the immediate abolition of a usage, which he knew could not, in the ordinary course of human affairs, be at once terminated without great and distressing political commotions. He designed that his blessed gospel should, in process of time, by its benign influence on the hearts of men and on the policy of nations, put an end to many evils which it would have been unwise and incompatible with the spirit-

ual nature of his kingdom, to abolish suddenly, by an act of his royal prerogative. No conclusion, however, can be fairly drawn from this fact in defence of involuntary servitude. On this subject, Christianity speaks a language, and evinces a spirit at once intelligible and decisive. Its grand aim is to teach and dispose mankind to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God. It pleads the cause of the oppressed, and forewarns the oppressor of a day of righteous retribution. It proclaims liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison house to all who are unjustly bound. Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, are factitious distinctions, destined to be absorbed in due time by the generous principle of brotherly kindness.

But the kingdom of Christ is not of this world; it therefore interferes not, directly, with the regulations of States. Its conquests are of grace; its reformations are accomplished by the bloodless victories which it secures over the hearts and tempers of men. One of its favourite maxims is to "overcome evil with good;" and, in doing good, to give its enemies as little occasion as possible to blaspheme. It dissolves neither natural nor political relations; but gives instructions for the right discharge of the duties resulting from those relations.

The grace and consolations of the gospel were designed for persons in all stations, and of all capacities in human society. None are so wise as not to need its counsels; or so holy as to be in no want of its pardoning mercy; neither are any so low as to escape its kindly notice. While the opulent and the mighty are exhorted not to trust in their transient wealth and power, but in the living God, servants of all grades are invited to become the Lord's freemen; and by faith in the Redeemer to seek after glory, honour, and immortality. But, in order that



each class may acquit themselves properly in their respective conditions, they are to lend an attentive ear to Him who instructs them from heaven, and to have respect in the whole of their deportment to that recompense of reward which awaits every soul of man at the judgment-seat of Christ.

“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” Let no subject be deemed unworthy of our serious regard which the only wise God has assigned a place in the Bible—our only safe and infallible rule of faith and practice.

*Servant*, is an appellative which in its general import comprises a large proportion of the citizens of every civilized State. It is not a term of reproach; but of distinction. To one who understands its meaning, it conveys no ideas of a mean or disreputable kind. It signifies much the same as minister; and we have servants or ministers of the family, of the State, and of the Church. But the term, as used in our text, is limited by its connection; not, indeed, to such persons as are held in involuntary bondage, but to those who are bound to render service for a given time on equitable conditions and for benevolent purposes. Persons may become servants in this sense, either by their own agreement, or by the act of parents or guardians, with a view to secure them a home, and the necessary means of subsistence, or a knowledge of some useful occupation. Involuntary servitude for life is inadmissible and indefensible on Christian principles, except for the punishment of a State criminal, after legal conviction. A republican government tolerating hereditary slavery is a political solecism. And although Christians may, perhaps, for a time and in peculiar circumstances hold slaves, yet for myself I must declare that I cannot reconcile the practice with the admired and truly admirable rule of “Doing unto others as we would that they

should do unto us." There are thousands of instances in which a man may desire to be a servant; but no rational being ever yet felt willing to be himself a slave, and leave his offspring in bondage. It is contrary to that inborn love of liberty and self-government which belongs to human nature, even in its lowest and most uncultivated state. If, as we read in holy Scripture, God has made of one blood all nations, and if, as is acknowledged in the constitution of every free government on earth, all men are born free and equal, no human legislature, no convention of nations, no earthly power can give one man a right to the services of another, but upon terms mutually agreed to, and mutually beneficial to the parties concerned. It is sometimes alleged that the comforts of the slave are equal to those of the master. If so, why does not the master, occasionally at least, change places with his slave? It is also said that many masters treat their slaves with great humanity and kindness; allowing this to be true, it amounts to nothing more than an extenuation of what cannot be justified. Indeed, we have no very exalted idea of that humanity which may at times be displayed by persons acting habitually and systematically on wrong principles. Truth and righteousness are essential to virtue and goodness.

But we are rather deviating from our subject. Let us consider the purport of the precepts before us: First, as to the duty of servants.

I. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart as unto Christ."

By servants, as has been already remarked, are meant not only slaves, but all persons who are either hired or indented; and who are consequently bound to render faithful service to their employers, on such terms as may have been agreed upon. Such per-

sons are here addressed by the apostle as Christians. Many of them had become hopeful subjects of redeeming grace, and it was important to the honour of the gospel that they should perform the duties of their station in a manner that might show that godliness is profitable unto all things. They are therefore required to acknowledge the authority of their masters and to manifest towards them all due obedience and respect. This they were to do "in singleness of heart." That is, sincerely and with contentment, "as unto Christ," their divine master; whose good pleasure it was that they should glorify him by a conscientious and diligent attention to the duties of their humble condition. The phrase "masters according to the flesh," indicates that the master's authority does not extend to the conscience or religious principles of the servant. And while this is the case, one may serve his God as well in the most lowly as in the most elevated station.

"Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will, doing service as to the Lord, and not to men."

An eye-servant is one who performs his task from fear of punishment, or disgrace, without any sense of duty, or fear of God before his eyes: one in whom the absent master can place no confidence: one whose highest motives are mercenary; who aims to please men, but has no desire to please God; one who disregards the spirit of his obligation; who takes advantage of the absence or weakness of his employer, to neglect his business and waste his property. Such conduct is base and criminal in a high degree. It is a breach of good faith; a gross and habitual departure from the Christian rule of duty. It not only wrongs the master, but brings certain disgrace and ruin on the servant who thus acts.

And we may remark in passing, that the sin re-

proved in this portion of Scripture is not confined to that description of persons immediately contemplated. Ministers of the gospel, whose highest aim may be to escape censure, who content themselves with a formal round of ministerial service, regardless whether the souls of their hearers be saved or not, may be pronounced eye-servants: or, if they handle the word of God deceitfully, softening or disguising the doctrines of Scripture, with a view to accommodate them to the depraved taste of the natural heart, they are men-pleasers, and in the judgment of Paul, cannot be the faithful servants of Christ. In like manner, men who are invested with offices of State, and who despatch the duties of those offices in a loose and negligent way; who cheat the government, or dissipate the property of the public, prove themselves eye-servants, and unworthy of confidence. He that would maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and man, must endeavour uniformly, and without much regard to the fashion or favour of the world, to discharge the duties of his station, "with good will, doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men."

"Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

Here is an encouraging promise. Services faithfully rendered may not be always rightly appreciated by mankind. Servants are sometimes blamed when they are not blameworthy. But let them not be tempted thereby to become careless or unfaithful. They shall not lose the reward of their fidelity. They seldom fail to secure the good opinion and kind sympathy of the wise and the discerning among their acquaintance, which, generally contributes to their credit and comfort, even in the present life. But if their conduct should be misrepresented, and their worth pass unacknowledged by men, the

searcher of hearts, and gracious rewarder of the just will wipe away all reproach, and place their character in the clear light of truth in the day of judgment. In the view of heaven the pious servant is of as much account as the pious master, though the latter may be much more highly esteemed among men than the former. He that serves the Lord, Christ, and proves himself faithful in the care and management of that which is another man's, shall in due time be put in possession of the true riches: while, from the faithless and disobedient eye-servant shall be taken away that which he hath, and he himself shall be cast into outer darkness. In the final issue of things, one talent well improved will be found better than five neglected. Let those who move in the humble walks of life mark, and remember this truth. It may tend to suppress envy, and to render them content with such things as they have. "Godliness, with contentment is great gain." It is great now; it will be felt to be unspeakably great in the hour of death; and in the bright light of eternity, it will be seen to be all that is worth an anxious thought. Our fortunes, our conditions and circumstances in this life are various; and this transient variety, through the folly of our hearts, gives occasion to our restless passions of envy and pride, jealousy and vain-glory. But we should recollect that the present world derives its chief importance from that which is to come. All distinctions, except those which are of a moral and religious kind, will be dropped on the brink of the grave. And in the future world, we shall be judged and disposed of according to the deeds done in the body; according to the faithfulness with which we shall have fulfilled the duties and improved the advantages of our place and relations during our continuance in the life that now is. No man indeed can merit the rewards of heaven; for all good thoughts and right actions are

the fruits of grace. But grace reigns through righteousness; and, in assigning our allotments in the world of spirits, the claims of truth and justice will not be overlooked. There, all veils will be taken from all hearts, and every one will receive a just recompense of reward. There, all that shall be found "washed, and justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God," will be "accepted in the Beloved;" whether they have been rich or poor, noble or ignoble, in the present diversified scene of trial. There, it will scarcely be matter of inquiry, except for the sake of publishing the manner in which we have executed the functions of our respective offices, whether we have come from the court or from the cottage—from ministering at the altar, or from serving in the family. If we are the servants of Christ, we shall be where he is; and, being where he is, we shall be blessed; for we shall see him as he is, and be like him. Let all, therefore, who with good will do service wherever Providence has placed them, as to the Lord, and not to men, know assuredly that "Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

II. The duty of masters.—"And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him."

When masters are directed to do the same things unto their servants as the servants are to do unto them, the meaning obviously is, that both classes are to act on like principles and from like motives; i. e., on principles of justice and charity, and from motives derived from the impartial inspection of God and the righteous retributions of the final judgment.

We take the word *master*, here, in a sense co-extensive with its correlative, *servant*; as including not

only slaveholders, but all householders who have in their employ indented or hired servants; with all master artists, mechanics, agriculturists and merchants who have apprentices in their service, for the purpose of making them acquainted with their respective occupations. And the general observations which I have to make concerning the duty of masters, will apply with nearly equal force to the several descriptions of persons just mentioned. Masters, then, and mistresses, too, (so far as their influence extends) are obligated,

1. To give their servants a sufficient quantity of wholesome food and comfortable clothing, unless these things are otherwise provided for them. Humanity demands this; and it is indubitably necessary to their health, their usefulness and contentment. They should be allowed a reasonable time for taking their meals, and be saved, as far as practicable, from vexatious interruptions while thus employed. You who have the Spirit of Christ, I am happy in believing, feel unconscious of any unkindness of this sort towards your servants. But there are persons who fail in their duty, and sin grievously in this matter. A little inquiry would, perhaps, discover more ill-fed and badly clad servants than a benevolent mind would wish to suspect. Multitudes of those hapless beings who make the sugar and rear the cotton and rice of the southern States have but miserable fare in this respect. I know there are many creditable exceptions; but it is notorious and undeniable, that some masters feed and treat their dogs and horses much better than they do their negroes. Happy were it for such men did they reflect that "their Master also is in heaven, and that with him there is no respect of persons."

2. Masters should be moderate and reasonable in regard to the amount of service which they require at the hands of their servants. Oppressive tasks

should not be imposed upon them. The duties enjoined on them should be adapted to their age, strength, and skill; and they should be allowed some time for rest and recreation. This is what every human being needs, and what he has an unalienable right to, even in the work-house where his sweat flows in expiation of his sin against the State. It is distressing to humanity to see children carrying burdens beyond their strength, or a servant at any period of life harassed and deprived of rest in its proper season, to gratify avarice, or to minister to habits of licentiousness and dissipation.

3. Masters should endeavour to make their servants happy, by approving of their conduct when it is praiseworthy; and in general by acting towards them in a kind and soothing manner. This seems to be what is chiefly intended in our text by the phrase, "forbearing threatening." Gentleness, and a little condescending attention to persons of low estate, are indications of real greatness and dignity of character. Such treatment from a master to an ingenuous servant is a cordial; and often operates as a powerful incentive to industry and faithfulness. At all events, it is a piece of courtesy which costs but little; and it is for the most part returned in good measure. But, independent of this consideration, a good man ought not, he cannot, be regardless of the feelings and happiness of the humblest person with whom he may be in any way connected.

4. Finally; masters should train their servants in correct moral and religious habits. By some, I am afraid, this branch of duty is utterly neglected. By others it is but partially attended to; because it is viewed by them as an object of no more than secondary importance. But in my view, and according to my understanding of Scripture, it is a matter of primary importance and of indispensable obliga-



tion. The master's duty in this respect involves that of a parent. All souls are the Lord's; and all are alike precious, whether the bodies which they animate be "bond or free." All need instruction in their duty to God their Saviour; and who will, who can give this instruction if the master refuse? I have read, indeed, with horror and disgust, of certain legislative enactments making it penal to preach the gospel to negroes, or even to teach them to read. This is a dark piece of policy. The council hall where it was carried into the form of law should be closed, and on its doors should be written "Ichabod; the glory is departed." Christianity has no alliance with such policy; "nor," to use the words of a distinguished statesman, "has the Almighty an attribute that can side with it." Christian masters, who have infant servants belonging to their households, should dedicate them to God in baptism as they do their own children. They should pray with them and for them; teach them to read the Bible, and require them to learn such catechism or digested form of gospel doctrine as they deem most agreeable to Scripture; should endeavour by precept and example to imbue their minds with a profound reverence for the Creator and for his laws and ordinances. Particularly they should teach them to remember the Lord's day to keep it holy; should procure them accommodations in some house of public worship, and see that they attend there, that they may participate in the solemn services of the sanctuary. The custom of permitting servants and apprentices to run at large on the Sabbath afternoon, and till late in the evening, is exceedingly pernicious, not only to their morals but to the peace and good order of the community. Masters of every description, think of these duties. I have set them before you without disguise, as they appear to me to be enjoined in the book of God.

Think of the responsibility which attaches to the station which you hold as heads of families and masters in your several occupations. Cherish a parental regard especially for the children and youth under your control and guardian care. They need all the influence of your authority, your example, your instructions, and your prayers. You cannot neglect them without becoming in some degree partakers in their sins. But should you succeed in training them for usefulness and heaven, God in blessing them, will bless you, at least with the pleasant reflection, that your labour was not in vain in the Lord.

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## LECTURE XXXI.

### THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE.

EPHESIANS, VI. 10—17.—Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked: and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

IN consequence of our apostasy from God, the world is filled with sin and wretchedness. The joint counsels of infinite wisdom, justice and grace, have, indeed, opened a way for our return to duty and happiness through the mediation of Christ, the Redeemer. The gracious plan of salvation has been revealed to us in Scripture; and we are urged,

by considerations eminently calculated to influence rational beings, to accept the provisions of mercy, and live for ever. Many persons regard these joyful tidings as cunningly devised fables; and, of course, treat the gospel with negligence and contempt. Others, however, are disposed and enabled by the agency of the Holy Spirit, accompanying the ministry of reconciliation, to believe the divine testimony, and to acquiesce in the proffered terms of deliverance from the guilt and bondage of iniquity.

It is to such persons, chiefly, that the apostle addresses himself in the passage of sacred writ now before us. Those who have embraced the Christian religion, are here reminded that they have engaged in a warfare, in which spiritual strength, and the use of spiritual arms will be indispensable to their success and ultimate victory. And lest they should be discouraged at the formidable enemies which may be expected to oppose them in pursuing the prize of their high calling, they are directed to trust in God, and to draw from the arsenal of heaven the armour which has been provided for them, and which, if rightly used, under the conduct of the Captain of salvation, cannot fail to secure them a glorious conquest.

The apostle's manner of bringing this subject before the Christians of Ephesus, is worthy of notice, as being affectionate and well suited to bespeak serious attention:—"Finally, my brethren." He was now coming near the close of an epistle in which he had exhibited the leading doctrines, and sublime hopes of the gospel, as well as the various duties of the Christian profession. Like a father, therefore, taking leave of his children, he premonishes them of danger, and gives them his best instructions. In one respect, he was their spiritual father; but, in another point of view, he was their brother; and he is not ashamed to call them bre-

thren in Christ. Whatever distinctions might exist among themselves, or between him and them in other respects, yet, as Christians, they and he were children of God, and disciples of Jesus.

The first piece of advice is of great importance, and deserves to be carefully marked and well understood by every one who has enlisted, or who may think seriously of enlisting under the banner of the cross.

“Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”

I. The contest in which you are engaged, Christian brethren, will be too arduous for you without divine aid. You are going out against a mighty confederacy. You will do well, therefore, to go forth in the strength of the Lord, and in the power of his might. Youthful soldiers are particularly apt to err here. Luther’s ardent and amiable coadjutor in the Reformation, remarks of himself, that when he first set out in the cause of Protestantism, he really fancied great things might be accomplished in a short time; but experience soon taught him that, “Old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon.” And many preachers, since the days of Melancthon, have imagined on their first entrance into the ministry, that it would not be difficult to turn sinners from darkness to light; but a little trial has conviuced them, that “Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but that God giveth the increase.” Nor is it at all uncommon for private Christians, under the delightful impulses of their first love, to indulge too much confidence in their own strength. And this mistake frequently occasions great distress and anxiety respecting one’s interest in the blessings of redemption. Our religious affections are not always alike ardent. There are times, I believe, when the true disciple has to walk in darkness, staying himself on the mighty God of Jacob. In

such seasons, if we have not other grounds of hope than our own feelings and past experience, we shall be quite comfortless, and in danger of yielding to despair. We are very apt to mistake a change in ourselves, for a change in God our Saviour. When it is not with us as in months past, we are ready to exclaim in anguish, "Is his mercy clean gone? and will the Lord be favourable no more for ever?" The truth is, "our sufficiency is of God." The condition of a Christian is a condition of dependence; and, in this, his safety very much consists. Grace received will not serve him for future exigencies. The soul, like the body, needs its regular supply of daily bread. All fulness is in Christ, and from that "fulness we receive, and grace for grace." "When I am weak, then am I strong." "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me." Remembering where our strength lies, let us

II. Take a view of the enemies with which we have to contend in this war. These we shall find to be numerous and subtle. And it is of great consequence for us to be acquainted with their power, their weapons, and their mode of warfare. The first named in our text is the devil. "That ye may be able, says Paul, to stand against the wiles of the devil."

Certain modern critics have undertaken to show that there is no devil. They tell us that those passages of Scripture, which seem to teach his existence, are figurative, and are not to be taken in their literal import. This is a refinement, or, rather, a whimsey, which we are not disposed to admit, without looking well to consequences. Say that Satan is nothing more than a figure of speech, and what will follow? Why, truly, that a metaphor succeeded in tempting our first parents to eat the forbidden fruit; that a metaphor tempted Jesus Christ in the wilderness of Jordan, by assailing him

in three different forms, and, that, to refute its foul suggestions, our divine Instructor gravely cited several passages of Scripture. It was a metaphor, also, that put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray his Master. It is a metaphor that ruleth in the children of disobedience. It was to destroy the works of a metaphor that the Son of God was manifested. And, according to this way of interpreting the sacred writings, we must believe that Paul the apostle directs us, in the text, to put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of a figure of speech, denoting, nobody knows what. This is criticism, it must be confessed, of most peculiar potency. By a free use of it, one might turn the most awful truths of the Bible into mere rhetorical flourishes. But, in verity, its efforts are idle, as well as offensive to common sense and Christian sobriety. When it shall have done its utmost, it will be found that there is a devil; that he is emphatically the wicked one, crafty, and implacable in his hostility towards God and man. We must, therefore, prepare to meet his temptations, and to stand against his seductive stratagems.

Nor is it with this arch-fiend alone that we have to cope. He has, under his command, other fallen angels, that are closely connected with him in opposing the kingdom of Christ; and who, as it would seem, from the apostle's manner of mentioning them, are of various orders. "Principalities, and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world; and spiritual wickedness in high places." I shall not detain you with any speculations concerning the nature, the rank, or probable number of these evil emissaries of the wicked one. Lest some persons might be inclined, from reading and hearing so much about the influence of Satan, to ascribe to him a sort of omnipresence, let it be observed that,

whatever mischief is done among God's works, by any of the apostate angels, is usually in Scripture attributed to Beelzebub, their leader; on the same principle, I suppose, that whatever is done by an army, is, in common language, referred to the commander-in-chief. We are not to forget that the devil and his angels are created and dependent beings; and, therefore, however great may be their power, and however malignant their influence, they are bounded and controlled by the power of Jehovah. They are permitted, for a season, to exert their baleful energy in opposition to truth and righteousness, for reasons which we do not, at present, fully comprehend. We know, however, that it is and will be overruled, for the glory of the Redeemer, and the good of his people. Let us not be dismayed at their wiles and foul machinations. The captain of our salvation is mighty. He bears in his hand the keys of death and hell. If we are faithful to his cause, and observant of his orders, we shall come off more than conquerors.

But our dependence on divine grace is not to supersede our vigilance and activity. God, our Saviour, perfects strength in our weakness, that we may exert it; he supplies us with arms, which we are to use with all diligence, under the guidance and influence of his Spirit. Of these weapons of your warfare, you have an account in the passage of Holy Scripture now before us. There are several pieces of them, and they are all useful; and when taken together, constitute what is called the armour of God. Let us view them distinctly, and try to ascertain the usefulness of each. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day." The whole is to be taken. Every piece has its appropriate use; and if we take some only, and leave others in the armory, we shall not be completely equipped

for the field. This suggests to us the necessity of universal obedience to the commands of Christ. Nothing short of entire confidence in him, and unreserved devotion to his service will answer. He gives no needless or arbitrary orders; he appoints no superfluous means. All are holy, just, good, and necessary. "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth." The Christian soldier is not to suffer himself to be taken by surprise. He is to be continually on the alert. A thousand mischiefs may be prevented by vigilance. While men sleep, the enemy lays his plans and pushes forward his preparations. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. "Having your loins girt about with truth." Here is an evident allusion to the military belt in use among the ancients. This served not only to keep the other garments in their proper order, but to brace and strengthen the parts around which it was girded. It was favourable both to strength and agility. Truth, evangelical, divine truth, the Christian's girdle, has a similar influence on the mind. "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways;" sometimes one thing, sometimes another thing; capable of becoming any thing that fashion or interest may suggest. To be halting between two opinions, now leaning to one side, and now to the other; as it is a comfortless, so it is an idle, and to say the least of it, an unprofitable state of mind. What is truth? What is duty? are the questions which claim our first attention. The Bible solves these questions; so far as the pious mind is concerned in their solution. Here then, let the Christian take his stand; let him gird up his mind with the truth as it is in Jesus, and whenever the question arises, Is such a doctrine true, or such and such a practice right? let him go to the lively oracles of God for a decision; and having received the judgment of infinite wisdom, let him abide by



it at all hazards. Such a one will not be unstable in his ways, he will not be undecided, hesitating, and liable to be blown about by every wind of doctrine. He will not stop at every step, to ask, Have any of the rulers believed on him? How will my compliance with the laws of Christianity affect my temporal interests? What will the world say of me? Ah, how many almost Christians these questions have staggered, and driven from the ranks of those who were fighting the good fight of faith! Beware, Christians, of hesitancy and indecision. Act, as seeing Him who is invisible. Secure the approbation of Jesus Christ. Go forward in the path of duty, under the bracing and quickening influence of gospel truth, and though a host should encamp against you, the truth shall make you free.

“Having on the breastplate of righteousness.” The breastplate was a covering of some kind of metal, to be worn on the breast, as the word imports. It was designed to secure the vital parts of the soldier from the darts of the enemy. The Christian’s breastplate is righteousness. That is, a conscientious regard to the law and authority of God. This consciousness of truth and duty raises him, in a measure, above the smiles and frowns of the world. Not that he places any dependence on his own best works, or most zealous endeavours to serve God; but, while he looks to Jesus, as the Lord his righteousness and strength, he feels a strong and animating persuasion, that no weapon raised against him will be allowed to prevail; that though he may fall, he will rise again, though he may be wounded, the wound shall not prove mortal; his vitals are secure, under cover of that perfect righteousness which is unto and upon all them that believe; his life is hid with Christ in God, and his crown no man taketh from him. Be careful, then, to put on the breastplate of righteousness.

The breast is a part that should be well secured in the day of battle. Secure an interest in the Redeemer's righteousness; try to maintain a sense of your interest in it, and this will render trials tolerable and duty delightful. "Herein exercise yourselves to have a conscience void of offence towards God and man."

"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." Soldiers are often called to pass through the woods, or along ways that are beset with briars and thorns. They were, therefore, provided anciently with a kind of armour for the feet. The Christian has sometimes to pass through, sharp and piercing trials—or, deep and miry afflictions. And if these lie in the highway of duty, they are not to be evaded by seeking bye-paths. Turn neither to the right hand nor to the left, is the command of the divine Master. Of what vast importance it is, then, to have our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. That is, to possess those tempers and dispositions which will enable us, without murmuring or fretfulness, to suffer the will of God. This preparation to meet sore trials, and glorify God by enduring them, is one of the distinguishing effects of true religion. Abraham had something of it when he left his country, at the divine command, not knowing whither he went. Job had it, when he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. Eli had it when he exclaimed, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth good in his sight. David had it, when with devout acquiescence in the divine will he said, "I was dumb and opened not my mouth because thou didst it." But the gospel of peace imparts it to the disciples of Christ in a still higher degree; because here we are assured expressly, that "all things work together for good to them that love God." Endeavour then, Christians, to have "your feet shod with

the preparation of the gospel of peace.” This will help you to endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. This will enable you to walk through dangerous places unhurt. Affliction you cannot expect to escape. But you know that whatever befalls you is according to the will of your heavenly Father. Under this persuasion, press towards the mark for the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Hold on your way rejoicing. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

“Above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.” The shield was made of leather, or hides, and covered with some kind of metal. It was fastened by thongs to the left arm; but was easily moved for the defence of any part of the body. The dart lighting upon it, was blunted and fell to the ground. This, when darts were used in war, was, perhaps, the most important piece of defensive armour. Such, to the Christian soldier, is faith in the divine testimony. Many a slanderous and venomous dart is cast by the wicked against the person, the cause, and the disciples of Christ. Fiery and poisonous are the shafts of Satan, the father of lies, and the prince of apostate spirits. But faith, the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen, opposes to these arrows of infuriate wickedness, a buckler, a sure defence, an impenetrable shield, that bids defiance to all the fire and venom of the bottomless pit. This, Christian soldier, is the shield of the mighty; let it never be shamefully cast away. It is an essential, and pre-eminently useful piece of armour. Keep it in good repair, and wear it. The warfare in which you are engaged is a fight of faith, a fight in which you need not expect even a temporary armistice. You will need your shield till the last enemy is subdued, and you are heard to sing in triumph, “O! grave where is

thy victory, O death where is thy sting!"—"And take the helmet of salvation:" or, as the apostle expresses it in another place, "And for an helmet, the hope of salvation." The helmet was used as a defence for the head, the seat of thought, of life, and probably the residence of the soul. To the Christian, the hope of salvation is more than a helmet to the soldier's head in the day of battle. The helmet might be lost, and the man still outlive the conflict; but if hope of salvation be gone, the soul falls a victim to despair, and gives up all for lost. The object of the contest is yielded; and instead of laying hold on eternal life, the desponding sinner, not unfrequently, dies by his own hand. Put on then, for an helmet, the hope of salvation! and pray God that it may be a good hope, through grace!

"And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." This is the only weapon of the offensive kind that belongs to the armour of God. The use of the sword is well understood. The word of God in a moral sense, bears a striking analogy to it. "It is quick and powerful," says Paul, "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." It is in the skilful and discreet use of this weapon that the soldier of the cross is to cut his way through the wily stratagems of Satan, and the formidable sophisms of wicked men. The Saviour has left us an admirable example of the judicious use of this piece of armour, in his memorable conflict with the grand adversary in the wilderness of Jordan. And a very elaborate dispute respecting the divinity of Christ, was once arrested by a pertinent and seasonable citation of the first verse of the gospel according to John: "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God." Be prepared then, Christian, by an intimate acquaintance with the sacred oracles, to give a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.—"The

heavens shall wax old, as doth a garment ; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever."

III. The object of this contest. What is it ? The greatest, the noblest, and the most lasting that can be named—ETERNAL LIFE ! Words cannot express, nor can the mind of man conceive an adequate idea of its magnitude. What the world calls great, and good, and honourable, will not bear a comparison with it. It is a complete and everlasting deliverance from all that it is evil ; and a participation of all that is truly good, and purely delightful. The inspired writers seem at a loss for emblems to set forth its matchless glory and transcendent value. Hence that variety of lights in which it is presented to us in the sacred volume. It is a rest, a triumph, an unfading crown, an incorruptible inheritance, a kingdom that cannot be moved, a fullness of joy, rivers of pleasure—it is heaven—it is God himself, the source of bliss, the perfection of beauty—the life, the portion, the only sufficient portion of the intelligent and immortal soul. What are all the treasures and honours of this short life, compared with the unfading glories of immortality ? The salvation of the soul is an object of such incomparable magnitude, that all things else dwindle into nothing before it. To the faithful soldiers in the Christian warfare may be applied those animating words of Paul : " All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Come what may, they are safe and happy ; for their life is hid with Christ in God." Hear how they sing in triumph over the last enemy : " I have fought the good fight ; I have finished my course ; I have kept the faith ; hence, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day," &c.

Learn from our subject, professing Christians, to adhere closely to the gracious Captain of your salva-

tion. You have witnessed a good confession : you have bound yourselves by solemn sacrament to follow Christ Jesus, the Lord, whithersoever he may lead you. You have voluntarily ranged yourselves under his standard ; and he has not drawn you into his service by a display of false colours. He has forewarned you faithfully, of the perils and hardships which you must expect in fighting the good fight of faith. He has taught you, that if you would come after him, you must be temperate in all things, deny yourselves, and bear your cross. Be not discouraged then, if, at any time, you find the conflict to be more severe than you anticipated. "In the world ye shall have tribulation"—and again, "All that will live godly, in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." Take with you these premonitions and you can never charge your blessed Master with having deceived you. I feel particularly solicitous for those of you who have recently professed your attachment to the Redeemer. Your inexperience lays you open to many dangers and discouragements. You are, as yet, but slightly acquainted with the enemies of your salvation. If you are God's children you have yet to learn more of the treachery of your hearts—more of your weakness—more of the subtlety of Satan, and the seductions of the world. But let none of these things discourage you. You ought, indeed, to be self-diffident and humble. But he that is in you is greater than all that can conspire against you. "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." "When I am weak then I am strong." "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." These are some of the favourite maxims of Paul, a Christian of the first order. Let them be yours, and you have nothing to fear, but everything to hope for. Keep near the Captain of your salvation ; lose your own weakness in his

omnipotence, and he will assuredly give you a crown of life. Read over, frequently, those many great and precious promises which he has given you in the charter of your immortal hope. "To him that overcometh, will I give of the tree of life; he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death; him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of God; to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my father in his throne." "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."



## LECTURE XXXII.

### THE DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER.

EPHESIANS, VI. 18—20.—Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds; that, therein, I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

THESE words are intimately connected with the preceding verses, to which our attention was directed in our last lecture. Having described the enemies of the Christian soldier, and the arms by which those enemies are to be resisted, the apostle here reminds us of our dependence on God for success in the conflict, and of the importance of prayer, as a suitable expression of our dependence.

All objections to prayer, drawn from its supposed inefficacy, bear equally against the use of any means for the attainment of a desirable end. The command of God makes it a duty; the devout heart knows it is a privilege; and its utility consists chiefly

in its bringing to our aid omnipotent grace in time of need. Let us attend to what is taught on the subject in the passage of Scripture now before us, from which we may gather the following ideas, viz: 1. That prayer is a duty of constant obligation; "praying always." 2. That it is various as to its manner, its object, and the measure of publicity with which it is performed; "with all prayer and supplication." 3. That it is to be offered in humble reliance on the aid and influence of the Holy Ghost; "in the Spirit." 4. That it is to be accompanied by persevering watchfulness; "watching thereunto with all perseverance." 5. That we are to pray for others; "for all saints, and for me," says Paul, "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel."

1. Prayer is a duty of constant obligation. We are to engage in it daily, frequently, regularly, in all the diversified and varying circumstances of life. This is a point which, I fear, is not duly regarded by some who yet acknowledge the propriety of the service on special occasions. We are too prone to neglect God in times of prosperity or when business seems to demand a more than usual share of our attention, and to look to him only in seasons of distress. This is a great error, and manifests a very criminal degree of ingratitude. It would seem to indicate that we wish to live at a distance from our Maker, except when we feel our need of his saving help. The spirit of genuine devotion will prompt us to set the Lord always before our eyes, to implore his grace and protection continually, to thank him for all his benefits, to adore him in every dispensation of his providence, and to seek communion with him in all the ordinances and institutions of his appointment. Indeed, occasional prayer, like occasional attendance on the preaching of the word, affords but slender



ground to hope that we shall be edified, or in any respect materially benefited by it. Scarce any thing valuable is accomplished by a few efforts scattered and disjointed by frequent and long intermissions. The duties of religion are of a nature not to be despatched speedily, or by a few hasty and slight endeavours. The plan of redeeming grace is to form its subjects to a holy habit, by repeated and in most instances long continued acts and exercises of a devotional and sanctifying tendency. "Pray without ceasing." "In every thing let your requests be made known unto God." A praying attitude of soul is indispensable to our success in the Christian warfare.

2. Prayer is various as to its manner, its objects, and the degree of publicity with which it is performed—"with all prayer and supplication." By what is called ejaculatory prayer, the heart may and ought to be lifted up to God every hour of the day and every wakeful hour of the night. In this way we may enjoy the inestimable privilege of communing with our Heavenly Father constantly and in all possible circumstances. While pursuing our secular occupations, making journeys, or passing along through the crowded scenes of business, we may maintain profitable and delightful converse with heaven. This is a sort of unceasing prayer. Let us avail ourselves of the advantage which it affords for living a godly, sober life. Are you suddenly assailed by provocation to anger or resentment? Before you speak or act on the occasion, lift your silent but earnest prayer to him, "from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift," for a portion of that wisdom which is profitable to direct you in all emergencies. Thus may you be deterred from taking a step or uttering language which it may be difficult to recall; or which, if not recalled, will in the issue break your own peace and injure the cause

of truth and righteousness. Does Satan at any time inject into your mind evil thoughts? Oppose to his fiery darts the shield of faith; and invoke the influence of Christ, who has promised to provide for your escape from every temptation, and who perfects strength in human weakness. Thus, while your confidence in the Captain of your salvation is confirmed, the adversary will be foiled, and you will be enabled to go forward, conquering and to conquer "spiritual wickedness in high places."

The devotions of the closet present us with another species of prayer, which seems to be included in the phrase "all prayer and supplication." This is distinctly marked and strongly urged by our Saviour; nor can we neglect it without slighting his authority and forsaking our own mercies. "Enter into thy closet, and shut the door: pray to thy Father who seeth in secret." Yes, blessed Master! it is fit and proper, it is good and honourable so to do. To the heaven-aspiring soul it is a welcome retreat from a noisy and distracting world. However small its dimensions or plain its furniture, it is preferable to the splendid drawing-room. It is the ante-chamber of heaven, where the Christian soldier receives his best lessons on the right use of his spiritual panoply. Here we can examine ourselves, reflect on our past conduct, and contemplate our future prospects under the immediate eye of the Searcher of hearts. Here we can hear from God our Saviour through the medium of his written word, and tell him all our secret sorrows. Here we can thank him for our personal blessings, acknowledge our personal sins, and bespeak his grace and guidance in the active and public duties of our station.

Family worship includes another kind of prayer which is of vast consequence. We have family wants, and receive at the hand of our God, family

blessings. These wants should be expressed, and these blessings acknowledged, around the domestic altar. Abraham, Job, and Joshua, are eminent instances of strict attention to this duty. The morning and evening sacrifices, under the levitical law, showed its importance. It is implied in the whole tenor and drift of the New Testament; and it has been practised by the most pious and exemplary Christians, from the age of the apostles till the present time. Every revival of religion leaves among its wholesome fruits, less or more praying families. And, in my opinion, no Christian family can neglect it without incurring guilt, and sustaining serious loss as to their religious improvement and domestic comfort. Let parents consider well their obligation to this duty. It is practicable; it is greatly useful; and no excuse for neglecting it will be sustained as valid in the hour of death, or at the judgment-seat of Christ.

The prayers which form a part of public worship, are also of great importance to the general interests of religion. These should be varied, from time to time, so as to suit the existing circumstances of the congregation in which they are offered. They should be of moderate length, in plain, grave, and solemn language, easily intelligible, and adapted to impress the hearts and interest the affections of the worshippers; and every person who professes to join in this solemn service, should be careful to maintain such an outward deportment, and such an inward seriousness, as may correspond with a direct act of homage and adoration to the glorious and holy Father of spirits.

3. Our prayers should be offered in humble reliance on the aid and influence of the Holy Ghost, "in the Spirit." We are to acknowledge and feel our dependence on God for all right views and good desires, God is a spirit, and claims to be wor-

shipped in spirit and in truth. Spirituality is essential to the acceptable worship of Him, who looks through all outward appearances directly upon the heart. "But that which is born of the flesh, is flesh." Hence the necessity of the Spirit's renewing and purifying influence, which is provided for in the covenant of redemption. "The Spirit, also, helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered." Rom. viii. 26.

It is the Spirit that gives us a strong sense of our wants, that raises our desires to heaven, and enables us to approach the throne of mercy, expecting with filial confidence an answer of grace and peace. Christ is the way to the Father; and the Holy Ghost is our only unerring guide into the presence chamber of the Great King. If any of you feel your want of his divine agency, lay hold of that most gracious promise, and unequivocal assurance of the blessed Redeemer—"If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke xi. 13.

Great Comforter!

"Assure my conscience of her part  
In the Redeemer's blood;  
And bear thy witness with my heart,  
That I am born of God!

Thou art the earnest of his love;  
The pledge of joys to come;  
And thy soft wings, celestial dove,  
Shall safe convey me home."

4. Prayer is to be accompanied by persevering watchfulness; "Watching thereunto with all perseverance." We are too apt to offer our prayers in a cold, formal manner; with little or no expectation of their being answered. And this is, probably,

one reason, why we receive so little benefit from our frequent supplications. When we present a petition to an earthly court, or legislature, we generally connect with it such accompaniments as we deem most favourable to the attainment of our object; we wait upon it with watching and solicitude to see the result. This is natural, and evinces that we are in earnest in our application. Let us observe a similar conduct in regard to the prayers and supplications which we prefer to the throne of grace. When the Jews were rebuilding Jerusalem, their enemies conspired to hinder the work; "Nevertheless" says Nehemiah, "we made our prayer to our God, and set a watch against them day and night." Neh. iv. 9. There is a beautiful harmony in the methods of redeeming love. Dependence and activity, prayer and watching, faith and good works, justification and holiness, go hand in hand in our restoration to God and happiness. Sinners feel their disease; and then apply to the good physician. Believers feel their weakness; and, from a deep sense of their insufficiency, they apply to the fulness that is in Christ, and confidently expect grace and strength commensurate to their duties and trials. If we ask God to deliver us from the power of some besetting sin, we must watch for an answer to our prayer, by keeping, as much as possible, out of the way of temptation. If we desire him to show us his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ, we must study the Scriptures, and try to understand the necessity and advantages of the mediatorial office of the Redeemer. If we desire that he would make the gospel prove the savour of life unto life to our souls, we must attend on its ministry with reverence and docility, regarding it not as the word of man, but, (as it is in truth) the word of God. In short, whatever be our request, provided it be warranted by the sacred oracles, we

are to wait and watch to see how it may be disposed of. This is important, not only as an evidence of our sincerity, but because prayer is often answered in a way different from what we expect. God frequently denies our particular request, and gives us something that is better for us. Paul besought the Lord thrice for the removal of a certain affliction, which he calls a thorn in his flesh, and received for answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

5. We must pray for others; particularly "for all saints; and for me," says Paul, "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds." In other passages of Scripture we are instructed to offer prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings for all men. But, in this connexion, it was natural and proper that our regards should be particularly directed to "all saints," as they are our fellow-soldiers in the good fight of faith. By saints are meant, not the tenants of a monastery, (for the monastic order was not in existence in the apostolic age), but the sincere disciples and followers of Christ. For these, and for all of them, wherever they dwell, and however they may be distinguished from us in matters of non-essential import, we are to offer our fervent intercessions. This is one of the laws of the Redeemer's family: and it is one with which every faithful member of his house will very cheerfully comply. It is the family badge. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." "Bear ye one another's burdens; and so fulfil the law of Christ." "Look not every man on his own things; but every one on the things of others." "Be perfectly joined together, in the same mind, and in the same judgment." This fellow-feeling, and consequent

interceding for all saints, does not imply an approbation of the doctrinal views and ecclesiastical usages of all denominations of Christians. Nor does it preclude a firm and decided preference for our own immediate connection. Truth and primitive simplicity are to be preferred and defended, by example, by temperate argument, and by every other lawful means within our power. The law of love, however, does prohibit persecution, misrepresentation, bitter controversy, and every thing that tends to alienate the affections of Christians, or to disjoin their efforts to advance the kingdom of their common Saviour.

When offering our prayers and praises to our God, let us, agreeably to the apostle's advice, think of the saints, and give them an interest in our humble intercessions. They are not only a feeble flock in comparison with the mass of mankind, but they are scattered over a vast portion of the inhabited globe. They are not all so free, so happy, and otherwise so advantageously situated, as the Christians of this favoured country. Many of them are under the rod of oppression, cramped in their outward privileges, and, by establishments, and state alliances, are denied the free exercise of their rights of conscience. Some of them are in pagan lands teaching the poor heathen, and endeavouring to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto the liberty of the redeemed. In such circumstances, they need our sympathy; they earnestly solicit our prayers; and, if we were to change situations with them, for a little season, we could never afterwards forget them, in our addresses to the throne of grace. While we read of the hardships, the privations, and discouragements of the little groups of saints in Asia, Africa, and among the savages of our own continent, who are preparing the way for the spread of the gospel

in those dark and desolate regions, let us not forget to entreat the Great Father in heaven, that he would multiply unto them grace, mercy, and peace; that he would strengthen them with might in the inner man; that he would give success to their labours of love; that he would shield them in times of peril, and, at last, lighten their dying pains, by the assured hope of an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

That class of the saints whose office it is to preach the gospel and dispense its sacraments, seem to have a special claim to a share in our intercessions. "And for me," says our apostle, "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel." Who sends this humble request to the praying people of Ephesus? Paul, an ambassador of Christ, whose call to the work of the ministry was indubitable; who knew his Redeemer, and was persuaded that a crown of righteousness awaited him in heaven. Yet he asks the prayers of his Christian friends. But for what purpose does he solicit their intercessions? Not for his own personal convenience; though he was in deep affliction—a prisoner in bonds. He was now at Rome, chained to a common soldier, who was charged with his safe-keeping, for trial at the bar of Cæsar. But these things dismayed him not. He lived for Christ; and his great wish was, that he might be enabled, in answer to the supplications of his Ephesian friends, to preach the unsearchable riches of his beloved Master with courage, and in demonstration of the Spirit. May not Christian ministers, then, without egotism or affectation, ask the prayers of the pious for the like end? Most assuredly. And, Christians, you are wanting in your regard for the Church of God, if you do not



pray for those who minister in holy things; whether they be settled pastors or missionaries. They are earthen vessels, entrusted with an inestimable treasure. Their sufficiency is of God; and he makes them wise to win souls, usually, in answer to the prayers of his people. In the grand contest between redeeming grace and the powers of darkness, ministers of the gospel are placed in the forefront of the battle, and, if they are faithful to their awful trust, their labours and perils, their trials and solitudes are of no ordinary kind. Their responsibility is inexpressibly great. Compassed with infirmity, and exposed to peculiar temptations, they are liable to fall as other men; and whenever one of them does fall, it is, "as when a standard bearer fainteth." Cease not, then, Christians, to commend them to the grace and care of the chief Shepherd. The success of the gospel ministry is intimately connected with the glory of Christ: and you know where it is written—"The effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much."



## LECTURE XXXIII.

### CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY, AND ITS SOURCE.

EPHESIANS, VI. 21—24.—But that ye, also, may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things; whom I have sent unto you, for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts. Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity: Amen!

THE true disciples of Christ are linked together by very strong and endearing ties. Their experience, their desires, and their aims, are substantially the

same. They serve one Master; have one hope of their calling; are influenced by one Spirit; and are going to one common heaven. Their circumstances in spiritual matters are similar; they are prepared for glory, ordinarily, by like means. Their enemies are the same; they are to use the same armour in maintaining the mighty conflict with the powers of darkness; and they all obtain the victory through grace. It is quite natural, therefore, that they should love one another, and take a deep interest in each other's welfare.

Primitive Christianity certainly operated in this way: and we have a striking instance of it in our text. Here is Paul, the apostle, despatching a messenger from Rome to Ephesus, (a distance of more than a thousand miles), to acquaint the believers of the latter place with his religious affairs; to tell them how the good cause prospered under his ministry, even while he was in bonds; that, by the gladdening influence of this good news from afar, their hearts might be comforted; and, that they might be encouraged to go forward in the race set before them, holding fast their profession and rejoicing in God, their Saviour. The person who was employed on this occasion as a herald of glad tidings, and probably as the bearer of a copy of this Epistle, to the Ephesian Christians, is mentioned in several other passages of Scripture:—Acts, xx. 4; Coloss. iv. 7; Tit. iii. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 12. He is supposed to have been an evangelist; i. e., a minister of the gospel without any particular charge, whose labours were of the missionary kind, performed chiefly under the direction of the apostles. Tychicus was an intimate friend and companion of Paul. The terms in which he is mentioned, are at once affectionate and highly commendatory: “a beloved brother, and faithful minister in the Lord.” The pious conversation, and faithful preaching of

such a man, together with the interesting account which he would give of the success of the gospel at Rome, must have been eminently calculated to confirm the faith, and warm the hearts of the brethren in and about Ephesus.

This portion of sacred writ, suggests the importance of a free communication and friendly correspondence among Christians. Not only should those who ordinarily worship in the same house, and sit at the same communion table, know each other, and endeavour to be useful to one another by mutual prayers, counsels, sympathies, and other offices of kindness; but different denominations that are agreed in the fundamentals of religion, should be connected through their church judicatories, and by a regular interchange of delegates. Such a medium of intercourse operates as a check upon bigotry, favours united efforts for the propagation of the gospel, and gradually prepares the way for the ushering in of the millennial light of the latter days, when the watchmen shall see eye to eye, and when Christians shall exhibit to angels the delightful spectacle of brethren dwelling together in unity. The Church of God is really one; and though its members are distributed into various families, and spread over the world, yet they do, and ought to harmonize in their prayers and exertions for the coming and glory of the Redeemer's kingdom. But this kingdom does not advance with equal rapidity and power in all its provinces at the same time. Some portions of Zion are refreshed with heavenly influence, while others are barren and parched. Even in the same religious connexion, there is often a great diversity in this respect. Some congregations are blessed with precious revivals of religion, while in others, the things that remain seem ready to die. This has been remarkably the case in the Presbyterian Church in the

United States, ever since its foundation. We have heard of from fifty to a hundred persons being added to the communion of small churches, at one sacramental season, in a number of instances. Might it not be greatly useful for churches which are in a languid and almost lifeless state, to send messengers to some of those favoured places, where the conquests of redeeming grace are so rapid and numerous, to mark the means that may have been most signally owned of God in the conversion of sinners? Would not the reports of these messengers, on their return, be likely to rouse the careless, and animate the feeble and desponding to greater diligence in the duties of their high calling? And, had we a competent number of evangelists, "beloved brethren and faithful ministers in the Lord," men of hallowed lips and enlightened zeal, who should visit the churches, preach the gospel, and tell the people and their stated pastors of God's marvellous acts for the salvation of souls, I cannot but think that the effect would be great and salutary to the best interests of vital godliness. Even a correspondence by letters, written with care, and read publicly, has often been the means of reviving the latent principles of piety in the hearts of believers, and of awakening the consciences of the impenitent. Most people are fond of hearing and communicating news; and, under certain restrictions, it is useful so to do. But no news is so deeply interesting and important, as that which relates to the influence of the gospel in turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

If the hearts of believers at Ephesus were comforted by a knowledge of the affairs of the church at Rome, why should not we rejoice, and be encouraged to go on in the good ways of the Lord, when we hear of his wonderful works of mercy in a neighbouring State, or in any part of our misera-

ble world? Why should not the neglectors of God and his Christ in Philadelphia, be stirred up to seek an interest in the great salvation, when they hear of hundreds of their fellow sinners in other places embracing the Saviour, and condemning their former negligence with shame and self-abasement? Ah! if any of you who are now far from God, should ever be brought nigh by the blood of sprinkling, you will be humbled to the dust, that you have so long closed your hearts against him who came to save you from the horrors of the second death at the expense of his most precious blood. Why should you be indifferent on a subject so momentous as that of eternal redemption? It is inexpressibly interesting and delightful to those who discern the excellent glory of Jesus, and who feel their need of his saving help. Yes, and it will rouse your fears, at least when you come to die. O, that you were wise; that you would consider this in time, that it may be well with you when time shall be no more! Christ is as able and as willing to save you on the terms proposed in the gospel, as he is to save any other sinner on earth. The proffered terms are the same to all; and remember, they are such as shall leave you without excuse in the day of judgment. "Repent and believe the gospel;" "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out;" "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" and, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely;" "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear; and the Lord give us understanding in all things!"

We are now arrived at Paul's benediction upon his beloved Christian friends in the Ephesian church. It consists of two clauses of very weighty import; each of which deserves our serious notice. The first is in these words: "Peace be to the

brethren, and love, with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." By "the brethren," he evidently intends the professed disciples and followers of Christ. The primitive Christians were in the habit of addressing one another by this affectionate appellation, not out of contempt for the common ties of humanity which bind man to man, and oblige us all to acts of reciprocal kindness, but for sake of establishing a useful distinction, and in compliance with a piece of advice given by our Saviour, and recorded by the evangelist Matthew, xxiii. 8: "Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." Nor should this injunction be ever forgotten among Christians. It is placed in the New Testament as a maxim of permanent utility, and, in its genuine spirit and intendment, of indubitable obligation. Church dignitaries are not of divine right; and whether they have ever been of any real service to the cause of Christ, is at least questionable. Ministers of the word are in our apprehension, equal by office, whatever distinctions may appear among them as the result of a diversity of gifts and graces. And among private Christians, there is in religious matters a fraternal equality, and a ready disposition to "esteem others better than themselves." "Who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou, that thou hast not received?" "By the grace of God, I am what I am." Let us not be backward to own, as a brother in Christ, any one who seems to have imbibed the spirit, and who bears even in a faint degree the image of our common Master. Paul the apostle, educated at the feet of Gamaliel, endued with miraculous powers, favoured with a vision of the third heavens, honoured above his fellows by ministerial success, addresses the disciples at Ephesus as "brethren;" and that which Paul did, need not be considered as an act of great

condescension in the greatest man that may have appeared since his day.

But what did our apostle wish in behalf of his brethren? Peace, love, and faith. Three comprehensive and essential graces of the Christian character. Peace of mind and reconciliation with heaven, through the propitiatory sacrifice and perfect righteousness of the Redeemer: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Love, the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment, the principle of evangelical obedience, the mysterious and ever-during cement that unites by indissoluble bonds the holy kingdom of Jehovah. Faith, that credits the divine testimony, and appropriates to its possessor the benefits of redemption; that works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world; "the brightest evidence of things beyond our sight, breaks through the clouds of flesh and sense, and dwells in heavenly light." These three cardinal principles of pure religion, always exist and act in unison, forming a threefold ligament which attaches the Christian's best interests to the glorious throne of the immutable Godhead.

And whence come these saving virtues? They are not of human origin. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh;" and no cause can produce effects contrary or superior to its own nature. "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive-berries? either a vine figs? So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh." James iii. 11, 12. "Do not err, my beloved brethren, every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." James i. 16, 17. Accordingly, Paul implores peace, love, and faith for his brethren of Ephesus: "From God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." Let it be carefully noted, that

the Lord Jesus Christ is here, as in numerous other passages of sacred writ, joined with God the Father, as the adorable source to which we are to look, by prayer and supplication, for the blessings of salvation. Now, what does this prove? To my apprehension it demonstrates, beyond all rational doubt, that in the judgment of Paul and the other inspired writers, the Lord Jesus Christ is truly and properly a divine person. No apostle, no prophet, no angel, no mere creature, though he should be first in the scale of derived intelligence and highest in favour with God, may be thus associated with the Great Supreme as entitled to our religious homage and trust. But Jesus Christ is thus represented in Scripture; we are required to honour him even as we honour the Father. If, therefore, the Bible be a safe rule of faith and practice, Jesus Christ is ONE with the Father, ONE in nature, essence, power, and glory; and while I bless, adore, and trust him as the true God and eternal life, I honestly aim to worship and honour the God of the Bible. Let me not be charged with worshiping two or three Gods. To us, as to Moses and the Israelites, there is one God—and one only. I tender the profoundest homage of my soul to that lovely, self-existent, all-sufficient, eternal, and incomprehensible Being, who made and who governs heaven and earth, and who has revealed himself to man as Father, Son and Holy Ghost, three glorious substances in perfect unity; each of which is called a person, because the Scripture ascribes to each what we call personal acts, and applies to each the personal pronouns *I, thou, and he*.

But let us attend a little to the meaning of the second and concluding clause of the benediction: "Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; Amen." Grace is favour shown to the unworthy. All persons who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity are Christians; and, being justifi-

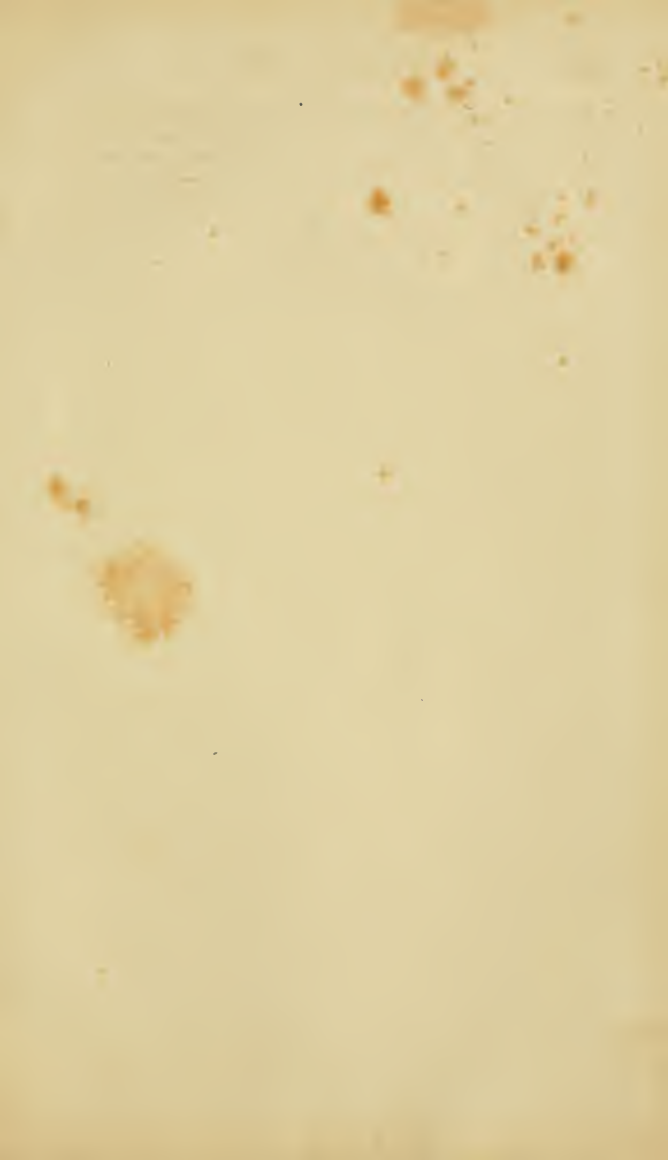


fied by faith, they are enclosed by the bonds of the everlasting covenant, and shall never come into condemnation: yet, in themselves considered, they are unworthy; and, therefore, are wholly dependent on grace to help them and bring them to the promised rest. They are warranted, indeed, to expect all needful aid and support in duty and under every possible trial. This is guaranteed to them in the covenant to which they have annexed their seal; but it is connected with their sincere love to Christ. What, then, is sincere love to Christ, and how does it manifest itself? Through what means, and on what occasions is divine grace exercised, particularly towards those who are the subjects of his love? A full answer to these questions will not be expected in what remains of the present lecture. The following brief remarks on the subject, are submitted in the hope that they may be helpful to us in our endeavours to ascertain our interest in the special grace of God the Redeemer.

“Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,” or, as the phrase might be rendered, in incorruptibility, i. e., sincere love to Christ is incorruptible and imperishable. It is the effect of a divine influence on the soul. It is one of the fruits of the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost, every one of whose redeeming acts is without repentance and abideth for ever.

This love for Christ is produced in the believer's heart in view of his transcendent excellence. It is not a blind affection for an imaginary or unknown being. “I know him whom I have believed; and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him,” is the language of a genuine and intelligent faith. A competent knowledge of the Redeemer, therefore, is inseparable from true love for him. This, indeed, is obvious and indisputable. We cannot love any being of which we have no knowledge. What is there in the Lord Jesus Christ,

then, that substantiates his claim to our pure and incorruptible affection? What that renders him the chief among thousands and altogether lovely? What that warrants Paul in this benediction to suspend the grace of God upon our loving him sincerely, and to say in another place, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha, accursed when the Lord cometh?" To say that Jesus Christ was an amiable man, an excellent teacher, and a great prophet, and that he died a martyr, would be to say no more than might be said with truth of many others. Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Daniel, Peter, John, Paul, and a host of other Scripture-worthies, were amiable and useful men, and many of them sealed their testimony with their blood; yet no peculiar love is exacted of us for any of them. The fact is, Jesus Christ is supremely excellent and glorious. In his person are concentrated all the amiable qualities of humanity, without any of its corruptions, and all the incomparable and adorable attributes of Divinity. In this peculiarity of his character, and in this only, do we find a sufficient and satisfactory reason for the importance which the Holy Scriptures attach to our loving, believing, and obeying him. We are to regard him not only as our teacher, example, and kind friend, but as our redeeming God and righteous Judge. His eternal, underived perfection lays an indubitable claim to our incorruptible, unqualified, and unutterable love. And when to his intrinsic excellence we add the consideration of what he has done and suffered for us, are we not compelled to acknowledge, that not to love him is a sin of the deepest die; a sin which must, in the nature of the case, for ever exclude us from the benefits of redemption?







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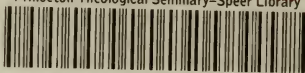
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